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by Jen Vuckovic, Chris Alexander, Sam Costello and The Rue Morgue

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# Note From Underground

Back in the 1930s, just as the grainy silents were first finding their voice, the zombie was born. From beneath the leafy shadows of the Haitian countryside, the first zombies emerged as little more than hypnotized goons, loyally, eerily doing the bidding of their voodoo master. And unlike the werewolf, the vampire, the mummy, or even Frankenstein's monster, the zombie truly was a creature of the silver screen; its somnambulist stare was prefigured in the eyes of the thing in Dr. Caligari's cabinet before it lumbered to life under the hypnotic gaze of Bela Lugosi in *White Zombie*. All this, before it was ever written about in a horror story.

The early zombie was a terrifying mystery wrapped in voodoo magic, but even at this early stage, there was more to it than that. Right from the beginning, it was hard to overlook the connotations of colonial culture and enslavement of indigenous people to a half life of drudgery and silent acquiescence.

Nevertheless, despite its strong supernatural overtones and kinship with the grave, it was not until the 1960s that the zombie crossed the line from voodoo slave to animated corpse. John Gilling's *Plague of the Zombies* may have also used the monsters to comment on Britain's social divide, but we remember the film's lavishly shot scenes in which the zombies – for the first time ever – poked their fingers through barely settled soil and rose majestically from their graves.

Two years later, in 1968, George Romero would run with Gilling's concept and put the final touches on the modern zombie. As if the supernatural force that brought them to life had only partial power over their bodies, the new zombies were physically decayed, utterly soulless and in constant craving of living human flesh.

Overnight, the zombie exploded in a shower of delicious gore, mainly due to Romero's bugle-y influential films and his many copycat admirers from around the globe. No doubt about it, by the '70s the zombie had finally reached adulthood, and its gruesome presence no longer denounced colonialism. Instead, the new zombie was a monster figure of the apocalypse, a grotesque image of impending social ruin and dead spirituality that also alluded to modern fears of depersonalization and alienation.

The copycats, of course, didn't really care for the associations and pretty much concentrated on the gutwrenching and slow moving chases – not that there's anything wrong with that. In fact, in their own oblivious way, they continued to develop zombie lore. Since Romero, zombies have become progressively tied to disease generally, the insinuation being that zombies are ultimately metaphorical of the human medical condition.

Zombies have also become preeminently slapstick, a fact that is continually punctuated every time an independent filmmaker sets out to make a zombie horror film and ends up making a gory comedy. In fact, zombies have become so cool that it's tough to remember a time when they were genuinely scary. But scary they are, unlike werewolves or vampires, zombies have no humanity in them, no reason, no empathy. Unlike serial killers, they also have no comprehensible motive. Their humanity has utterly left them; their physical drives are empty; their existence is meaningless. A more undiluted and utterly horrifying concept the genre has seldom seen.

The unfortunate truth, however, is that no matter how new things get, modern filmmakers are still pretty much reshooting Romero's *Dead* series, and maybe Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive* too. Nothing really new has been done with zombies, other than occasional breakthroughs in make-up effects and maybe a tweak to the concept here and there. For the most part, zombies still rot, crave human flesh and die with a bullet to the head.

2003 is the year of the zombie, and that's a cool thing no matter how you slice it. But we're still waiting for someone who is going to reinvigorate the concept yet again... and give us a century.

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RUE MORGUE #36 would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of: Steven Boyle, Garry Fizzard, Al McMullen, Adam Rockoff, Peter & Michael Spierig, and Regina Stannenler

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The Rue Morgue Magazine accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, art or other materials. Publishers' submissions accompanied by SASE will be seriously considered and, if necessary, returned.

RUE MORGUE Magazine #36  
ISSN 1461-1103

Registration No. 40323764

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# Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

**I JUST BOUGHT** your latest issue *Jessie*! You guys still have the best damn magazine in the genre! I LOVE IT LIKE AN ADDICTION!!  
**Guillermo del Toro - Somewhere in California**

**CONGRATULATIONS** to *Rue Morgue* on reaching its 6th Anniversary! The Richard Matheson section was fantastic (I think you guys are psychic because I've just been getting back into re-reading some of his work and was looking for a good retrospective). Also loved the *Travels of O.T. Terror* and *Manga* stuff. *RM* comes up with quality articles when other mags are resorting to fluff pieces and mindless filler segments.  
**Paul Watters - Falkirk, Scotland**

**I THINK** I'm going to have to sue *Rue Morgue*! I picked up my copy of issue #35 last night and I got a hernia because it's so packed with stories, photos and gory goodness. And the price didn't go up! Hal the gods of horror at *Rue Morgue*!  
**W. Bruce McVicar - Trenton, Ontario**

**I RECEIVED** the Halloween issue, #35, a few days ago and like always I first jumped to the back to read the Classic Cut sections. I was thrilled to see the article on *One Step Beyond*. I never stop being amazed at the amount of people who claim to be genre fans and talk about *The Twilight Zone* and *The Night Gallery* but shoot me a blank or disinterested stare when I mention *One Step Beyond*. The show may have had a short run, 1959-1961, but it was in syndication, in Chicago at least, well into the 1980s on WGN. Like your article stated, *One Step Beyond* was the first of many horror/sci-fi television shows and in my opinion the best. Thank you very much for giving well overdue and deserved recognition to a far too often forgotten great.  
**David Mancilla - Chicago, Illinois**

**THOUGH I ENJOYED** John Bowen's piece on *Hillbilly Horror*, I must disagree with his assertion that this sub-genre has no basis in folklore. Meet my friends Harriet and Gretel. One day very long ago they got stuck out in the middle of nowhere, and some creepy old lady tried to eat them. Little Red Riding Hood, on her way from Here to There, was sidetracked and stalked relentlessly thereafter by a hulking beast who enjoyed wearing women's clothing. Sounds like *Hillbilly Horror* to me. The situations may change, and the characters, and perhaps the setting, but when you boil it all

down it's the same story that's been scaring us silly since before the days of Grimm. And while it's true that many *Hillbilly Horror* stories take their inspiration from real events, so too does folklore. The cautionary tale is as old as humanity.  
**Gwenth - Ormond Beach, Florida**

**IF THERE IS ONE GUY** that needs to be covered on your pages, it's a native of "La Belle Province" and his name is Patrick Sénécal. He is Stephen King, Michael Slade and Clive Barker all wrapped up in a reinvigorated package. Two of what I consider to be his most accomplished novels, *Les Sept Jours du Talon* and *Sar le Seuil*, will soon be released as movies (*Sar le Seuil* will hit the big screen on October 3 in Quebec). Plus, it will be the very first "made in Quebec" horror picture to hit the big one. Don't miss the chance to discover what this guy is all about, you won't be disappointed.  
**M.P. Boucher - Gatineau, Quebec**

**THANK YOU** to *Rue Morgue* (particularly Rod Gudin) for not overlooking what I felt was one of the most profoundly disturbing movie experiences that I have had in years: Gaspar Noé's irreverent, a movie which makes *I Spit Out Your Gears* and *Last House on the Left* look like *Seance Street*. I didn't think a horror magazine would consider reviewing this movie even though, while not technically horror, it does have its share of horrific bits (and it's kind of sad that a movie that isn't even technically horror was more disturbing than so-called recent "horror" films).  
**Carlos Segura - Queens, New York**

**I WAS WONDERING** if your sick crew could review old Asian movies like *Ebola Syndrome*, *Gate of a Virgin*, *Evil Dead Trap*, *Red to Kill* and the like if you haven't done so. I would also like reviews of movies like *Aftermath*, *Accion Masacre* and such. Could we make this happen one day?  
**Joe Flores - Lansing, Illinois**

*Re: 0*, we did a cover story on *Aftermath* back in 1998 and we're waiting for the rest to get resuited. Keep an eye out.

**I'M A BIG FAN** of your magazine and I recently saw a band perform in Montgomery, Alabama called *Hallowmoss* that I thought you guys might be interested in. They played a great set covering two Mafia classics and some awesome

original material. I talked to the singer after the show and he told me he was a huge fan of *Rue Morgue* so hopefully he will see this letter and know how much we thought they rocked and hope they return to Alabama. All readers need to visit their site at [www.hallowmoss.com](http://www.hallowmoss.com).  
**Jason Rand - Hurst, Alabama**

**WHEN I GOT AROUND** to reading your May/June issue with the *Evil Dead* tribute I was absolutely appalled by the steering and contemptible review written for *Terrance Fisher: Horror Myth & Religion*. If I ever spend \$6 and then am subjected to this kind of hatred in your magazine, not only will it be the last time I ever spend a penny on your magazine again, I will also notify everyone I can (including the Catholic League) about the bigotry you publish. Nathan Tyler is free to have his views and *Rue Morgue* is free to publish what it wants, but the consumer has a right to know what he can expect to read after spending his money also. Mr. Tyler will undoubtedly continue to be rabidly anti-Christian. But will *Rue Morgue* continue to publish his brand of hate?  
**David Yuers - Walnut Creek, California**

*Nathan Tyler's narcissistic take on Fisher's book hardly qualifies as hate literature, more like a snide remark on what he considered to be the "scrabbles of a naive zealot." Exaggerating your power undoubtedly only compromises it.*

**MY FRIEND AND I** met your crew at the Comic Convention in Toronto (I was the one in the wheelchair you gave the sticker to). I just wanted to say that you guys were the coolest booth I had seen that day by far. We enjoy horror movies a lot and I thought I had some knowledge of the classic movies like *Dead Alive* and *Day of the Dead*, but wow, you guys blew us out of the water with all the stuff you know. Thanks for being so friendly; we'll see ya next year.  
**Karl Whitehead - Mississauga, Ontario**

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com) or:

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# Dreadlines

News Highlights



Horror Happenings

## Blood, bullets and brains at the Toronto International Film Festival

It was the 26th annual Toronto International Film Festival, and *Rue Morgue* was on hand to sample the dark delicacies being showcased and report back with our findings. This year, the horror genre was

mainly represented through the festival's crowd-pleasing Midnight Madness programme, which featured a selection of genuinely creepy, gory and decidedly weird offerings from around the globe.



*Haute Tension: A blood party of razorblades, axes and power tools*

### HAUTE TENSION

France – Alexandre Aja

Standout among entries of the fantastic and grotesque was Alexandre Aja's *Haute Tension*, a modern masterpiece of shock cinema that earned it the galleoeseque English title *Switchblade Romance*.

"In France, *Haute Tension* means two things: 'high voltage' and 'high tension', and in English you don't have that," Aja told *Rue Morgue*. "We thought another title

would work better with the movie."

Nevertheless, *Haute Tension* is just that – 87 minutes of gut-wrenching tension building up to some of the most brutal payoffs in recent memory. An unflinching camera captures the unrelenting savagery as a brutish killer descends on a cottage in the woods to indiscriminately kill and torture its inhabitants, among them a young woman determined to rescue her friend from the carnage. Cue in a blood party of razorblades, axes and

power tools exploding in a shower of arterial spray.

"We [Aja and co-writer Gregory Lavasseur] met together in the tenth grade and we liked exactly this kind of French magazine," the director noted, pointing to a copy of *Rue Morgue*. "And I think we saw so many movies, so many sci-fi and slashers and we liked so much this kind of movie that when we started to make a film, we wanted to make a tribute to all the films we loved."

Cribbing elements as diverse as *Maniac*, TCM and even *Jepers Creepers*, *Haute Tension* is undoubtedly an homage to what went before, and yet it stands as more than a tribute. With imaginative direction and razor sharp editing, *Haute Tension* comes off as a bitch slap to the sanitized American

slasher flicks of the past decade.

"Today you have *Ghost Ship*, *Thirteen Ghosts*, some bullshit like that; you don't find scary feelings in films like that," says Aja. "We have a very straight and simple story, very classic story. You know, one night, two girls try to survive till the morning. It's a very simple story where we could put some references to the other films, but we wanted to do it in a way that justified the use of these scenes. We tried to take the



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common ideas and move them in a different direction, play with the audience's expectations."

Chief among those expectations is the plot point that gets a young woman against one of the most determined and ferocious killers to redden screens in the past few years. Concentrating on his heroine allowed Aja to take his story in to more interesting territory, including (but not limited to) a much talked about twist to the ending.

"A female hero is a good choice," notes Aja, "because when you have a female hero you can play on the cliché about the girl at the beginning — you know, shy, intro-spective, and you can convert her at the end of the film into a warrior with the crazy and savage aspects. For us the best example is Ripley from the *Alien* series; a female character becomes so much stronger because you accept the survival instinct more from a girl than from a guy — you can be different. I think you play more with the female protagonist than the male."

Produced by Luc (*The Professional*) Besson, *Haute Tension* impressed Lions Gate enough to cut a deal and acquire the film for North American release which means it's likely you'll have a chance to see it in the new year. With a little luck, the film might even see a theatrical run, despite its excessive bloodletting.

"We are quite lucky because Luc gave us the chance to go exactly where we wanted to go," says Aja. "From the beginning he said, 'if the film is rated over 16, it's not a problem.' But of course we are open to many other cultures and other languages. I think maybe if we improve our English, we will try to make a movie in English someday."

## JU-ON

**Japan — Takashi Shimizu**

The creeps come out for *Ju-On* (*The Grudge*), which can very well be described as a party bag of Asian cinema scare tactics. A ghost story, natch, *Ju-On* focuses on the



*More Terror From the Far East: Supernatural shocker Ju-On (above) and Miike's surrealist yakuza horror Gozu (inset).*



still under the grip of an atrocity that occurred within its walls. Director Takashi Shimizu goes the flesh with an assortment of ultra-creepy images and scenarios, making this recommended viewing on fright technique alone, even if it retreads familiar J-horror tropes (for full review, see RM#35). No news of a sale, although Sam Rami seems intent on remaking the film for North American audiences.

## GOZU

**Japan — Takashi Miike**

Japan's warped mastermind, Takashi (*Ichii The Killer*) Miike, returns with a suitably unique entry into what was billed as his expanding legacy of "yakuza horror theatre." Alas, *Gozu* did have its share of body horror (an old Mafioso who stimulates erections by inserting a ladle into his rectum and, incredibly, a young woman who gives birth to a fully grown man) but for the main part, the movie avoided the ballistic gore audiences have come to expect from the outrageous director. Miike seems to have been profoundly influenced by David Lynch for his latest; *Gozu* is full of weird surrealism, strained black humor and a black gloved tip of the hat to Lynchian tropes, notably the doppelgänger. Nevertheless, it's not difficult to see why the controversial director has become so widely respected in record time. He's never uninteresting.

## UNDEAD

**Australia — Peter and Michael Spierig**

If The Spierig Brothers' B-styled zombie bloodbath hadn't impressed us, you probably wouldn't be seeing it on the cover of our latest issue. Reviewed elsewhere in these pages, *Undead* was one of the Festival's more memorable crowd pleasers. Lions Gate snagged distribution rights; expect to see the bright red results in theatres sometime in 2004.

## ALIEN: DIRECTOR'S CUT

**USA — Ridley Scott**

They say that he who laughs last laughs best, and it couldn't be truer than for Sir Ridley Scott, who seems to have finally garnered industry respect for his early works following the bustout success of *Gladiator*. Scott's classic *Alien* was recently restored to the director's full vision (before the studios made the cuts) and the fully restored print was shown to Festival audiences. *Alien* emerged remarkably well for a 25-year-old science fiction movie. Despite its straightforward plot, Scott's future vision is still bleak, inescapable and ultimately suffocating. The new cut, which restores a few grisly scenes is neither better nor worse than the theatrical cut, but that's not surprising given that *Alien* has become one of the great triumphs of the genre.

**Red Gudino**



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# Dreadlines

## ROADKILL

FROM THE  
INFO HIGHWAY



[www.galleryblink.com](http://www.galleryblink.com)

Gallery Blink pays tribute to namesake Vincent Price (called "Blink" as a child) with a host of low-brow monster art for your viewing displeasure. Visit the backroom for some of the best ghoully art for sale, visit the gallery for October's Monster Madness show.

[www.darknessinfo.com](http://www.darknessinfo.com)

Look beyond the bad grammar on this site to the deepest, darkest depths of human superstition. Here in find the origins and legends surrounding the likes of the New Jersey Devil, Sigfoet and other products of our collective, over-excited imagination.

[www.allthingszombie.com](http://www.allthingszombie.com)

Follow up this issue with a trip to All Things Zombie for the lowdown on the latest undead sightings and happenings, big and small. A veritable zombie feast!

[www.deadzombie.com](http://www.deadzombie.com)

Now that you're up-to-date on the latest zombie news, go for an extra helping of face maggots at Dead Zombie, a sootier-ear theatre for zombie freaks just like you.

[www.gothrosary.com](http://www.gothrosary.com)

Count your blessings and spook up your cleanse with a Gothic Rosary from Gothrosary.com, "cause nothing says spooky better than a Catholic goth. Hell Mary!

[www.livingdeadgirls.com](http://www.livingdeadgirls.com)

Who says chicks don't like horror? Find a uniquely feminine perspective of horror here. Better yet, read an account of a day in the life of a mortician - then scroll to bottom for a virtual autopsy because girl gore power reigns supreme!

[www.nightmaregloves.com](http://www.nightmaregloves.com)

Tired of cheap-looking Freddy glove knock-offs? Head on over to Nightmare Gloves for an authentic meat mitt that started out as just a dream in the mind of its creator, Robert England approved!

-compiled by Mary Beth Hedley

Got a website suggestion?

E-mail a link to: [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com)

## Industry sets its sights on Horror Channel

The entire horror industry is buzzing after the recent announcement of *The Horror Channel*, a new 24-hour digital cable network devoted entirely to horror, terror and suspense programming set to launch next year on Halloween day.

The ambitious project is headed up by founder and CEO Nick Psaltos, who has already raised \$750,000 to date, but needs to collect another \$3 million from the venture capital community over the next four months in order to get the channel off the ground. Psaltos, along with his Board of Directors, is currently fighting daily battles for financing, distribution and programming to secure the deal, unbelievably, the first channel of its kind in the US (following in the steps of Canada's three-year-old all-horror channel, *Scream TV*).

Psaltos envisions a channel mainly comprised of film and has stated that he expects to launch with 2000 titles, which he hopes *The Horror Channel* will be able to air uncensored. He also plans on introducing lifestyle content, documentaries and original series each season, including behind-the-scenes and filmmaker profiles, as well as fan-oriented shows like goth music events and an actual awards show.

The channel has been doing their homework in order to see this ambitious project reach your living rooms. They've put together an advisory board of genre veterans including George Romero, Wes Craven, John Carpenter and newcomers Eli Roth, Lucky McKee and Rob Zombie, among others, to round out programming ideas in addition to appealing to industry professionals and fans for input.

Nevertheless, the challenges are significant; in addition to securing up funds for the venture, *The Horror Channel* will also have to convince cable operators to sign up, otherwise the new network will not reach the homes it needs to survive. Psaltos is encouraging fans through the channel's official website to encourage their local cable operators into picking it up.

Even so, as of press time, no cable operators have picked up *The Horror Channel*, which plans to eventually raise \$82 million over the next two years to cover the costs of marketing, operations and programming.

Do your part by signing a petition to get your local cable operator to carry *The Horror Channel* at [www.horrorchannel.com](http://www.horrorchannel.com).

Ben Vuckovic

## Tours of Terror expands to summer

Lovers of haunted holidays and strange vacation spots will be thrilled to learn that the industry's top horror-themed guided event, Tours of Terror, has recently announced the expansion of its highly popular tours into a summer time slot. The DraculaTour To Transylvania typically runs from October 27 through November 3, but due to the increasing popularity of the vampire vacation, 2004 will see the addition of a summer tour from July 11 through 18. The 2nd Annual Ghost Tour to England will take place from June 6 through 13, 2004, for those who prefer spectres to blood-suckers.

"The biggest reason why we've added the summer tour is for all of the people who can't go during Halloween," commented a spokesman for the company. "It's for all the students, teachers and people who can't take a vacation in the Fall, as well as those in the

haunt business who've been wanting to take the vampire vacation for years, but must either work during Halloween, or have annual plans at that time."

The DraculaTour follows Jonathan Harker's journey to Dracula's castle and typically includes a mock witch trial, visits to haunted graveyards and a stop by the world's largest and oldest tools of torture museum. The tour includes visits to Bran Castle, Clock Tower, the Black Church, Vlad Tepes' birthplace, Vlad's castle (also known as the fortress) and even the monastery where Tepes is buried.

Each tour averages 40 guests of all walks of life (and death). Keep your eyes on future issues of *Rue Morgue* for a full review and visit [www.toursandevents.com](http://www.toursandevents.com) for more information.

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Adopt them from [www.begoths.com](http://www.begoths.com).

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# THEY CAME FROM DOWN UNDER!

## OR HOW TO MAKE A ZOMBIE MOVIE IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

BY JEN VUCKOVIC

With five major zombie movies having  
reddened screens this year, it's  
no surprise that 2003 was  
**THE YEAR OF THE ZOMBIE.**

Get ready for *UNDEAD*, a  
new Australian film that  
pays tribute to three  
decades of zombie  
flicks...

*Zombie Landscaper: The Spierig brothers pay tribute to genre legends Peter Jackson, Sam Raimi and George Romero with Australia's first hit zombie flick.*

**M**ore over George Romero, there's a new sheriff (or two) in Zombie-town and they're out for blood, brains and just about all of your vital fluids with their B-movie style, indie zombie epic—*Undead*. Hailing from the land down Under, twin brothers Peter and Michael Spierig spent close to three years fashioning this low-budget, but definitely not cut-rate entry into the annals of Living Dead history. Their movie cooks elements of *Dead Alive*, *Bad Taste*, *Evil Dead* and *Invisible Invaders* into a zombie gumbo that begs to be served up on a drive-in double bill like the B-movies of yesteryear. Nevertheless, this flawed, but honest gem of a film is getting the top-drawer treatment at film festivals all over the world because the Spierigs have taken the veritically burnt-to-a-crisp overdone zombie sub-genre, turned it on its enormous ear and given it a new spin—along with a hearty helping of hilarious gore of course—all on a budget of under a million self-financed, hard-earned dollars.

*Undead* begins with a shower of meteorites pummeling the small fishing town of Berkeley, Australia, bringing with it an alien plague that quickly spreads through the town. The film follows a group of locals and an intrapud zombie hunter, striving to survive against the onslaught of flesh-hungry, undead miscreants shambling around in relentless pursuit, along with a mysterious chemical rain. As their numbers fall prey to the rotting parishes, it's up to the recently crowned "Fob Queen" and the mysterious, John Woo-style gun-slingin' stranger to save the world.

Granted, *Undead* has its drawbacks (some of the characters will make you want to staple your gonads to a rusty slab of sheet metal, but it doesn't take itself seriously and it's got so much heart you can't help but love it. Boosting unbe-

lievable practical effects by Steven Boyle (see sidebar interview) and side-splitting gore, *Undead* wins on ingenuity and storytelling with a unique cause and effect tale that goes where no zombie film has gone before—a daunting task.

Complete with an aggressive Internet marketing strategy, *Undead* has managed to reap its rotting head at festivals all over the world to collect awards, fans and a distributor, Lions Gate, which has officially acquired the rights to the film in the US and Canada, with a planned limited theatrical run sometime in the fourth quarter of 2004. Not bad for two Aussie boys who started making horror films with sausages and chocolate sauce in their parents' backyard not ten years ago.

*Undead* recently screened at the Toronto International Film Festival to great acclaim and *Rue Morgue* caught up with the Spierig Brothers on the eve of their first screening with a non-Australian audience.

**What is the Spierig Brothers' background?**  
Peter: Both of us went to art college. I studied film and Michael studied graphic design for three years. I was making films during that period and Michael became interested in production design and started doing that kind of work on the short films I was making, then he crossed over indirectly into his first short. Up until the end of university we had made about twenty short films which were all different types of gen-

res and styles: horror films, comedy, sci-fi, action, drama, virtually anything we could experiment with. After college, a commercial director saw our reel and asked us to come and work for him—which was only about a month or so after we graduated.

**Michael:** We were actually standing in the unemployment line when he called! [laughs]

**Peter:** That's right, we were! So we ended up making TV commercials for three years together. We actually did a number of short films during that time, all while writing feature films. We knew from college that we were going to make a feature film, and that it would take a few years time, so we used TV commercials to save up money to make this movie—spent our life savings, sold the car, did whatever we had to do to make this crazy little horror film. But during the time that we were making short films, when we were just out of high school, we made a trilogy of horror films that stuck with us all the way through college and TV commercials.

**What were they called?**

**Peter:** The *Undead Trilogy*, strangely enough—*Attack of the Undead*, *Rampage of the Undead* and *Miscreant of the Undead*. The trilogy was similar to *Undead* in that they were splatter-comedies. They were roughly 15 minutes each.

"I don't want to  
do a sanitized  
**HORROR** film. I'd rather  
not do one at all."

—PETER SPIERIG



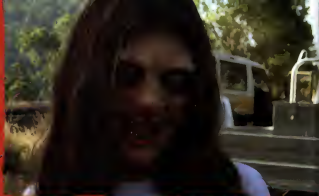
## FROM EATING MUCKS

From the depths of Expressionist fragility to the syrupy redness of Romero's gore-fests – and beyond, the zombie film has become one of the most cherished traditions in modern horror. For those of you who ever wanted to trace their bloody history, we hereby present:

## A ZOMBIE PRIMER

- 1920 *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*  
1932 *White Zombie*  
1935 *Quango*  
1936 *The Walking Dead*  
1943 *I Walked With a Zombie*  
1950 *Invisible Invaders*  
1966 *Plague of the Zombies*  
1969 *Night of the Living Dead*  
1971 *Tombs of the Blind Dead*  
1974 *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*  
1978 *Dawn of the Dead*  
1979 *Zombie*  
1980 *The Gates of Hell*  
1980 *Burial Ground*  
1981 *Dead and Buried*  
1981 *The Beyond*  
1985 *Day of the Dead*  
1985 *Re-Animator*  
1985 *Return of the Living Dead*  
1989 *Night Life*  
1992 *Dead Alive*  
1994 *Cemetery Man*  
1999 *Meat Market*  
2002 *Resident Evil*  
2003 *28 Days Later*  
2003 *Beyond Re-Animator*

—compiled by The Rue Morgue



Zombie makeup for *Undead* was inspired by "Evil Ash" from *Evil Dead II*.

There are a couple of scenes in the feature that we took directly from the shorts, but the story in the feature is greatly different than the shorts. I mean, the shorts were really just a couple of guys in a backyard with chocolate sauce and sausages! [laughter]

*Did you make the shorts to acquire funding for the feature you were writing?*

Peter: No, we made the shorts to learn the craft and experiment with special effects.

Michael: Yeah, we also wanted to learn a little more about editing. We were just out of high school and wanted to make films but didn't really know how.

*What made you want to make a zombie movie specifically?*

Peter: There are a lot of factors. Above all, we've suffered for about the past decade with shit horror films (like) the "psychological thriller/teen slasher" – there's a whole generation growing up thinking that's what horror is. We thought "that's a shame, why aren't we making the next *Evil Dead* or the next Romero film?" Thankfully, there has been a recent resurgence of good horror lately with people like Eli Roth and Lucky McKee.

Michael: When we started making *Undead*, there hadn't really been a good zombie movie in ages. There was another movie being made called *Undead* which turned out to be *Resident Evil*.

Peter: We also knew that if we were going to make a film, we weren't going to have any money for marketing. So we

needed to make something that would be easy to market, and we knew that the Internet could be a very powerful marketing tool and it costs, like, next to nothing to set up a website. We couldn't make a drama because there's no way we could sell it on the Internet...

Michael: ...with no names in it.

Peter: Right. But if we made a zombie movie with some really interesting gore and effects, we





# 2003 YEAR OF THE ZOMBIE

Unless someone's recently sucked out your brain through your eye sockets, you may have noticed there's been a helluva lot of zombie films coming out in 2003. From *Beyond Re-Animator* and *House of the Dead 2* to *28 Days Later* and *Undead*, the year has borne witness to a cornucopia of successful Living Dead films, with both large and tiny price tags – and the good news is, more will be crawling up from under the ground next year.

*Resident Evil 2* began shooting in Toronto around the time Universal's *Dawn of the Dead* remake wrapped (keep your eyes on upcoming issues for full on-set coverage), and Anchor Bay has announced a three-disc reissue of Romero's original blood-spattered social satire for the new year. Hallelujah! Following you'll find a recap of the more notable zombie film releases of 2003 and the *Rue Morgue* word on them. Bon appétit!



## HOUSE OF THE DEAD

If movies were cars, *House of the Dead* would be the back-firing K car with the scrapyard windshield and a rag for a gas cap. It's a patchwork of poor acting, poor editing and even poorer writing. It's a video game adaptation in every sense and, in case you forgot, the filmmakers remind you by flashcutting scenes from the actual video game during the film. Its only saving grace was the action sequence three quarters in with some fun special effects but, other than that, this dog is so bad it wishes it could merit classification in the so-bad-it's-good category. *House of the Dead* recounts the tedious tale of a band of idiots and a take-no-prisoners go-go dancer (?) who end up on the Isle del Muerte for a rave, only to get munched by the "re-animated homo sapiens" of a centuries-old Spanish priest who was banished to the island for creating a death-cheating serum. If you want to see what a cinematic piece of dog bark looks like, go see *House of the Dead*. Otherwise, stick to the video game.

## MUCHA SANGRE

As far as Spanish zombie-comedies go, *Mucha Sangre* (*Much Blood*) wins the audience assault award by a long shot. Here's the set-up: two fugitives, aided by a female cop, try to stop

a zombie invasion lead by none other than Paul freakin' Naschy! Bust open your melons, kids, because this is where the film takes home the aforementioned award; Naschy and his legion of muscle-munchers are actually from outer space, and they feed solely on the rotting meat of human females. The male of the species is reserved for anal sex, "cause these backward-minded space farts' zombies need to perpetuate their species too! Though shot in the late '90s, *Mucha Sangre* premiered at Fantasia 2003 to great revulsion and laughter. The debate is now on whether it's grosser than *Dead Alive*. You decide.

## 28 DAYS LATER

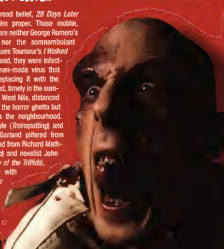
Contrary to widespread belief, *28 Days Later* was no zombie film proper. Those mobile, vicious creatures were neither George Romero's walking undead, nor the somnambulant automations of Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With A Zombie*. Instead, they were infected with Rage, a man-made virus that destroys reason, replacing it with the need to kill. This twist, timely in the summer of S.A.R.S. and West Nile, distanced *28 Days Later* from the horror ghetto but didn't evict it from the neighbourhood. Director Danny Boyle (*Trainspotting*) and screenwriter Alex Garland pilfered from Romero (who pilfered from Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*) and novelist John Wyndham (*The Day of the Trifids*), but still came up with something fresher than your typical walking corpse. Not universally

despised at *Rue Morgue*, in fact, recommended by some.

## BEYOND RE-ANIMATOR

The much anticipated third installment in the *Re-Animator* saga has been making the festival rounds and has been surprisingly well received. It seems there is a sect of horror fans that love just about anything Jeffrey Combs does, witness *Faust* or *Fear Dot Bomb* – total junk with a total following. But to its credit, *Beyond* does boast some great zombie action, which makes it well worth seeing. Consider it the perfect date and barfing movie.

— Jen Wuckovic and Sean Plummer





# YEAR OF THE ZOMBIE

*Undead mixes the slapstick gore of Dead Alive (above) with John Woo-style gun-slinging bravado (below).*

could at least generate somewhat of a buzz on the Net.

**Also, there aren't that many Australian zombie movies, right?**

**Peter:** Exactly, there's only one, you would be hard-pressed to find it too. It was made in the mid-'80s; it was about zombie vampires.

**Michael:** Which is really, really not good! [laughter]

**Did the fact that there were so many zombie movies scheduled for release in 2003 encourage or discourage you in any way in the making of Undead?**

**Michael:** We actually had no idea. We started making the movie in 2000. At that point, there had been no zombie movies out so we didn't even know what was to come. We didn't even know that *Resident Evil* was happening.

**Peter:** It was a coincidence, really.

**How do you collaborate and decide who does what?**

**Peter:** It's very much a 50/50 thing, we split everything down the middle. We don't specifically delegate duties. We do whatever is closest to us at the time. As far as something like scriptwriting, I don't even remember who wrote what. It's all a blur. I think if we were put in separate rooms and told to write a zombie movie, we would have come back with almost the same script. It's just the way it is.

**How do you resolve differences?**

**Peter:** We plan everything so extensively in pre-production that any differences or arguments

would happen in the pre-production stage. If we had ideas that disagreed, we would just come to a happy medium.

**Michael:** I can't think of any arguments that we had making this movie.

**Peter:** A lot of the screaming and yelling that did occur during production was directed at equipment and non-human elements of the team—that would be computers crashing and things like that.

**Michael:** Crappy cameras! A lot of the film was shot on Bolexes, on Super 16 film stock. They are old cameras.

**Peter:** We'd be shooting and all of a sudden the film would jam and the camera would pop open and the film would fall out.

**Did you lose everything?**

**Peter:** [laughs] Well, we'd have to figure out, "that's about 60 feet of film... what did we shoot in that 60 feet? Do we need to go back and shoot the previous scene or are we going to be okay?" Then we'd get the rushes back along with a nice surprise!

**Undead appears to be a straight-up zombie horror-comedy. Was it just an homage to the paranoid invasion B-movies of the '50s or are you two trying to say something with the story?**

**Peter:** Yes, there are a few moments in the film that definitely have that kind of social commentary but it was never our intention to put that in your face. When you do a film about a disease or an outbreak or infection, people are going to relate that to things that are going on now like A.I.D.S. or S.A.R.S. or whatever it is, but we really just wanted to make a movie that was a hell



STEVEN BOYLE, the mastermind behind the impressive FX work on *Undead*, reflects on 60 days of pure horror.

# BRINGING UNDEAD TO LIFE

BY JEM VUKROVIC

"**U**ndead" was shot over 60 days including second unit," says Steven Boyle. "I can't remember how many shooting days required zombies, but every time I try, my brain melts." The co-owner of Australia's ARC FX, Boyle is the architect behind the stunning special effects in Peter and Michael Spierig's upcoming zombie opus, *Undead*. His first feature in the role of creature designer and supervisor, Boyle cut his teeth doing makeup FX on big-budget pictures before he was approached by the Spierigs (with whom he attended film school back in 1995) to work on the brothers' low-budget zombie extravaganza.

"I had just over ten weeks to prep the prosthetics for the shoot," says Boyle. "I sculpted, molded and painted everything myself. There wasn't enough money to hire a crew, and my friends who did this kind of work were working on other shows, so the zombies were reverse engineered. That is, the facial prosthetics were made in three different sizes and we test fitted them on potential zombie performers to see who would fit what size. I don't think a single zombie was made in the traditional method. Also, Pete and Mike were very smart in terms of filming the zombies and made it look like there was a lot more of them in the scene than there actually were."

That ingenuity also extended to the details. In a particularly inspired moment, Boyle purchased

expensive contact lenses in a generic size that could fit everyone, and then rationed them out throughout the shoot.

"We really wanted the zombies to have white eyes," he notes. "We could only afford three sets of lenses so we used those as 'hero' lenses for makeups that were going to be in the foreground, and painted the eye lids of the background zombies white in order to look open and zombieified. Whether they wore lenses or not, they were all blind!"

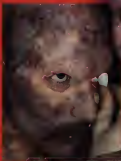
Not surprisingly, the resulting look was strongly reminiscent of the zombies of films like *Evil Dead II*, *Day of the Dead* and *Return of the Living Dead*. Boyle says that the Brothers felt that horror movies had lost something in the process of creating realistic makeup FX and really wanted to recapture that look.

"The '80s were the time when makeup and gore FX had more detail and focus," explains the artist/supervisor. "We wanted to go back to a certain zombie look that we felt was more effective."

As if making a low-budget zombie epic wasn't difficult enough, the crew were infected by a particularly aggres-

sive strain of the flu on the very first day of shooting (serily similar to the plot of the film) that worked its way through the set.

"I had been sick on shoots before, but not like this," Boyle reveals. "I turned green and couldn't talk or use my hands for application properly because I had the shakes so bad and woke up without sight in one eye. I couldn't do anything properly because my sense of colour and depth of field was all wrong due to my lack of vision. When I showed up on set the next day, I saw that the DOP had also got it. He lost his voice and was constantly passing out while they were shooting the takes. And that was just the first week of filming!" ☠



Steven Boyle worked magic creating jaw-dropping makeup effects on a minuscule budget



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEM VUKROVIC

# AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

## THE ZOMBIE SURVIVAL GUIDE

by Max Brooks  
Three Rivers Press

A How To book on coping with the living dead? *The Zombie Survival Guide* is exactly that. Purporting that the world in which we live in is infested with infectious, flesh-eating undead, the book painstakingly reveals tips and hints to emerge unscathed from a skobbering ghoul attack. According to this tome's internal logic, a disease called Solanum has the earth in its deceptic clutches; if an infected victim bites, scratches or spurts any of its festering zombie blood into your exposed orifices, in a matter of minutes, YOU TOO will become a dead man walking. A bullet to the brain will kill them, they're only as strong as the living body was, they don't feed off themselves blah blah blah – if you've seen any post-*Night of the Living Dead* zombie flicks, you'll know this shee-it is old hat.

I was about twenty pages into author Max Brooks' (believe it or not, the son of the great Mel Brooks) digest-size document, before I realized that this was going nowhere faster than a twice-killed corpse on a broken escalator. In theory it's a cute concept – a book that teaches the living to fight the dead and win – but it's a one-joke premise, one that is stretched painfully across 200 pages and is ultimately siffer than a ghoul's prick. Who the hell was this bloody thing written for? The back cover says file under "humour", but it ain't that funny, it's a starchy-sprawled, academically laid-out textbook written on a subject that has no Misch value. Just watch *Dawn of the Dead* again for a much juicier "how to deep six a zombie" tutorial instead of this numbingly dull and completely pointless exercise in mockumentary horror nonsense.

To be fair, this type of elaborate spoof may be of interest to zombie completists, and maybe I missed something. There are a couple of chuckles and squirms, but on the whole, *The Zombie Survival Guide* is duller than George Romero's dishwasher.



Chris Alexander

## YEAR OF THE ZOMBIE

*B-Horror in the Making: Three outtakes, including the Spiering brothers on set (opposite page).*

of a lot of fun. I don't want to give away too much about the film, but the end of it obviously has a lot of relevance to what's going on in Australia right now with the refugees from the Middle East and how they're being treated. It's not a direct commentary on it but those things are thought of in the back of your mind when you are scripting a film, so it's not random imagery. But at the same time, it's not what the film is concentrating on. Like I said, it's really just a hell of a lot of fun.

**Michael:** It's interesting though because zombie films tend to come out during times of war or social unrest.

**Why do you think that occurs?**

**Michael:** Well I think societal issues are reflected in these kinds of movies. The notion of society breaking down and people having to fend for themselves is a fear that comes up again and again in life. I mean, if you look at a film like *Last House on the Left* or *Dawn of the Dead*, they're almost like a postcard about the fears existing at that moment in history. I think that all of the big horror films that have come out of Hollywood in the last ten years have had nothing to do with anything but the big-breasted chick getting chased around by a guy with a hook or a knife and that's about it. They really have no spirit to them. Then again, I guess *Braindead* [*Dead Alive*] isn't exactly a commentary on the state of



New Zealand's society at the beginning of the '90s, or anything either, but it's got heart!

*There are some obvious nods to Romero, Peter Jackson's Dead Alive and Bad Taste, along with Sam Raimi's Evil Dead, and even John*

*Woo, but where your film diverges from those movies is in the originality of the story. What made you decide to throw in that much-needed extra element – the aliens – to spice up the narrative and give it more of a B-movie vibe?*

**Peter:** For exactly that reason. We wanted to take everything we knew and loved about those great horror films you mentioned and add a cause and effect to it by adding a mythology to why things are happening since it is really only hinted at in *Night of the Living Dead*. That's why the aliens were added. There's actually a cure for the disease and a reason for the cure, which we never really got heavily into. The problem with zombie films is that it's kind of all been done.

**Michael:** We wanted to give people what they are used to but then twist it and turn it and make the product something totally different. That was the plan from the beginning. We said, "we're making a zombie movie, what are we going to do that's different?" So if we could have the audience sitting there thinking, "I have no idea how this is going to end," then that's certainly

going to take it one step ahead of the rest of the zombie films that are coming out.

**Peter:** The B-movie atomic vibe is definitely there and intentional, along with the dialogue and the acting including the opening credits, even the score is very theatrical. It's got a lot of Bernard Herrmann [*Psycho*] qualities to it as well because of the use of a synthesized theremin. It's camp, it's supposed to be camp.

**The special effects, both digital and practical are extraordinary and ambitious for an independent film. How did you pull all of that off?**

**Peter:** We spent a lot of time playing and trying to figure out how to do some very complicated special effects with essentially no money. We thankfully had Steven Boyle [see page 19] on board to do the practical effects, which look brilliant. The digital effects were largely done by Michael and myself. There's around 305 visual effects in the film and we did about 95 percent of them. I have had an interest in 3-D animation for quite a while, back in the days of the *Anipals* 4000, when 3-D was in its infancy, and I had done some visual effects shots on some of my shorts but certainly nothing up to the level of *Undead*. There was a lot of time spent playing and doing research and testing.

**Michael:** Thankfully though, Steven has worked at an effects house for quite a while and wanted to start his own company, ARC FX, basically the Weta of Australia, with his business partner, Bevan Lynch. Steve's a practical makeup guy and Bevan's a digital guy. They came on board and Bevan did the digital alien for us. Those guys did all of the really intense 3-D characters and stuff for us because it was way beyond our capabilities. We were using *Lightwave* and *After Effects* on a Pentium 3!

**16 mm film compositing on After Effects! That's like hammering a nail with your forehead!**

**Peter:** [laughing] Tell me about it! What's worse is that we edited it all on a desktop computer using *Adobe Premiere*, which I don't recommend. It's great if you want to do a wedding video, but if you want to make a feature film, you're in for a hell of a time. That computer we were editing on was also rendering effects, and doing the sound design as well. We had three computers going at once. We had a laptop, which we did a large chunk of the end sequence on, and all the computers would crash, constantly. We would set it up to render a shot, which takes eleven hours for a single frame, and



it would crash at the end of every frame. Which meant we would have to re-render the render every frame. And for a four second shot at 24 frames per second, it was a complete horror show.

**Is that part of the reason why it took you three years to complete the film?**

**Peter:** That's exactly why!

**How have audiences responded to the movie so far?**

**Peter:** It's been great. Michael and I have only seen it with Australian audiences so Saturday's gonna be a very interesting experience for us here in Toronto.

**Michael:** The audiences we have seen it with have been fantastic. The reactions have been what we've hoped they would be and it's been appealing to a broader audience than we anticipated. People who have never watched zombie movies are finding it entertaining, which is great.

**Are you planning to make more genre films in the future?**

**Michael:** Yeah, absolutely. As long as they are interesting ideas.

**Peter:** It all depends. If we're going to do a studio picture next, I don't want to do a sanitized horror film, I'd rather not do one at all. We're definitely not in a hurry, though. We don't want to fall into the trap of taking an offer to direct some straight-to-video garbage when, if we are patient, we can do something with real heart in the future.

**How about *Undead 2*?**

**Peter:** Uhm, certainly not for our next film, but if the interest is there, yes.

**Michael:** If the film does well enough, it could become a franchise as long as we can maintain total control and as long as we get a budget this time, but I'm not going to do it the same way ever again. We've been working seven days a week, 18 hour days for three years. I can't go through that pain again because by the time I'm 30 I'll feel like I'm 60! Oh, and as nice as it was to make sandwiches for the crew on set, real craft service would be sweet! ♫

NOW SHOWING

# ZOMBIE pinups



We've seen a lot of sultry vampire visions in our time, but surely other classic horror types can coze sex — among other curious bodily fluids — can't they? Monique Moti has answered that question and delivered the provocatively putrescent goods with her unique website, *ZombiePinups.com* — the world's first site devoted to models of the putrefied persuasion. The site, which features '50s-style pinups of girls with short skirts and rotting flesh, began as a performance piece at first.

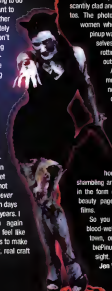
"I had intentions of doing a torch singer act as a zombie and singing I've Got You Under My Skin and I Fall To Pieces," Moti told *Rue Morgue*. But after an enthusiastic response to a zombie striptease where she peeled away her skin, Moti turned to the web with her idea.

*ZombiePinups.com* features a dozen women in varying states of decomposition, scantily clad and posed for cheesecake photos. The photographer/performer chooses women who are voluptuous in a retro pinup way, confident enough in themselves that no matter how ugly and rotting she can make them on the outside, they can still act sexy.

And it works. It's not uncommon for viewers to be simultaneously repulsed and turned on by the photos, says the San Francisco-based artist who uses store-bought and homemade costumes to dress her zombies and does most of the makeup herself. Like a proper zombie horde, *ZombiePinups.com* is stumbling around, spreading the disease in the form of live shows, Miss Undead beauty pageants, a cabaret and short films.

So you can wait for women with blood-wet lips to show up in your town, or you can check out *ZombiePinups.com* for a sickly-sweet sight.

Joe Vuckovic and Sam Costello



When people think of foreign horror films, they probably think of the Italian giallos, Cronenberg's movies and maybe one or two Japanese fright films. But what about the rest of the world?

A new book from FAB Press examines cinematic horrors from the far reaches of the globe and the cultural forces that shape them.

# WORLD OF TERROR

EXPLORING THE GLOBAL CULTURE OF **HORROR.**

by Rod Gudiño and Jen Vuckovic

Interview by Nathan Tyler



The word "foreign" has probably been more important to the development of horror cinema than any other word. Think about it; since the earliest days of Hollywood horror, the monster was always a foreigner. Dracula was a European immigrant (and it's no surprise that the role went to Romanian born Bela Lugosi – also a foreigner); Larry Talbot turned into the wolf man as a result of a gypsy's curse, and the mummy lived, died and was reborn in Egypt. In the 1950s, when North America cowered from the terror within, that terror was foreign in origin, brought on by aliens from outer space. Even when the films were uniquely American, as with the hilariously horror movies of the '70s, aggression was always aimed at the outsider, specifically because he was an outsider.

Xenophobia, it turns out, is a great fear that has deep roots in history and, in some respects, still retains a tight grip on the western world. It's not surprising to learn that most of the critical analysis to date surrounding horror cinema reflects the same ethnocentric bias towards films made in the West. But what about these other movies? What is horror like in places like India, Indonesia or Poland?

A new book just released by England's FAB Press attempts to answer that very question. Titled *Fear Without Frontiers: Horror Cinema Across the Globe*, the weighty tome examines the horror film phenomenon as a product of culturally specific fears. In doing so, the book details – coun-

try by country – the major players, their films and influences, adding rare interviews and much needed analysis.

Herein you will find horrors from Austria, Brazil, Germany, Spain, India, Poland, Turkey, South Korea, Chile, Mexico, the Philippines, giallo horror films from France, Indonesia's penanggalan tales, and Singapore's pot-luck cycle. In-depth chapters on the outrageous films of Hong Kong actor Anthony Wong and Spanish filmmaker Paul Naschy stand beside expositions on the likes of Alejandro Jodorowsky, Maxu Weibang, and Thai director Nonzee Nimitbut. To top it off, the book has been put together by a veritable who's who of the genre's top critics, among them Mitch Davis, Pete Tombs and Gary D. Rhodes to name but three.

Editor and international film scholar Steven Jay Schneider has compiled a groundbreaking horror tome the likes of which we have never seen before, comprised of 24 comprehensive chapters with selected filmographies and dozens of rare images and

stillies along with a beautiful 16-page full-colour section. This is perhaps the most important non-fiction genre text in years, and a Bible for any nihil-respecting cinephile who dares to peer beyond the frontiers of cinematic horror as we know it.

"It's my belief that one of the special qualities of horror cinema is that there are more or less universal anxieties and fears that are traded on in films from all over the world," explains Schneider, a PhD candidate at both Harvard and NYU. "I'm amazed by the fact that horror, perhaps more than any other genre, is truly global – that is to say that pretty much every country that has



a tradition of films has a tradition of horror films of some kind or another."

Even so, he is quick to point out that different cultures perceive fears in ways unique to them.

"People get a little disturbed when they think that I'm just blowing all these very disparate, heterogeneous films into one generic category, but that's not my intention," he says. "What I'm trying to do is pose the idea that different countries are dealing with some very fundamental anxieties, issues and concerns in their own way."

Although *Fear Without Frontiers* addresses the horror film industries in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Japan and Hong Kong, following are brief snapshots as it applies to countries with a smaller international profile.

## MEXICO



Most people who think of Mexican horror think immediately of the slow of cheesy vampires, zombies and extraterrestrials who battled Santo, the silver-masked wrestling king of the '50s and '60s (see *RMK35*). But Mexican horror dates back long before the *Achta* *Alve*, specifically to a series of twelve films made during the '30s.

Like Hollywood and indeed most of the world, Mexico was weaned on the German Expressionist films of the '20s and the American talkies of the early '30s. Unfortunately, dubbing proved problematic due to conflicting regional accents of the Spanish-language actors, and subtitles weren't an option because of widespread illiteracy. Cognizant of a huge untapped audience, Hollywood tried to create Spanish versions of their most successful films for export (the most famous case was Tod Browning's *Dracula* in which a Spanish crew reshot scenes using Spanish actors once the English crew had wrapped for the day), but these were not widely accepted.

Enter films like *La Llorona* (*The Crying Woman*, 1933), *Los Monjes* (*Two Monks*, 1934) and *El Fantasma del Convento* (*Phantom of the Convent*, 1934), which were completely untouched and uninfluenced by Hollywood horror films. Glutted with images of debilitation, fear and death, these movies drew from indigenous legends and/or the cultural malaise resulting from the political and economic situation of Mexico of the time.

Even so, the Mexican horror film would almost



**Mexican Menace:** A bizarre scene from Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre*

vanish until the '50s, only to resurface and plod along in a markedly light tone until Cuban-born Alejandro Jodorowsky came along with *El Topo* (*The Gopher*, 1970) and *Santa Sangre* (1989); the latter is a bizarre, frightening, Fellini-esque rendition of the real-life story of Mexican serial killer Goyo Cardenas. Jodorowsky continues to be a vibrant Latin American visionary and is currently in pre-production on a sequel to *El Topo* called *Los Hijos del Topo* (*The Sons of El Topo*) due out sometime next year.

## Turkey

Turkish cinema was a late bloomer, having only arrived on the world stage in the 1950s. Genre films weren't ever very successful in

Turkey, perhaps because they borrowed from Western horror instead of mining their own rich folklore for ideas.

The first Turkish genre film, Mehmet Muhtar's *Dracula İstanbul'da* (*Dracula in Istanbul*, 1953) was based on the novel *Kazıklı Vayvoda* (*The Voivode With the Stakes*) by Ali Rıza Seyfi, not on the more well-known Bram Stoker book, though the film is curiously more faithful to Stoker's novel than even the Universal films. The Turkish spin on the classic tale is largely folkloric: in the film, Dracula is destroyed by a stake through the heart, then his head is cut off and stuffed with garlic – the additional measures in keeping with the practice outlined in Seyfi's book.

Later on, the Turkish began churning out their own versions of American films, like Mehmet

REJISÖR: METİN ERKSAN

# Seytan



RENKLI

AVRUPA VE DÜNYADA ENİYİ SINEMALARA  
KAZANAN, YATIRILAN SİYEM VE SINEMALAR ARASINDA



Views of terror from Turkey's *Seytan* (poster) and Indonesia's *The Snake Queen*.

Alender's 1995 production *Let's Say It's Fate*, a low-budget Turkish version of Hitchcock's *Psycho* — interestingly, it featured singing throughout. Another straight-up horror film hailing from the country is Metin Erksan's *Seytan* (*Satan*, 1974), a blatant rip on *The Exorcist* that takes place in an Islamic locale.

Apparently, Freidkin's film was not released in Turkey until 1982, giving Erksan an opportunity to cash in on the international hype generated by the film.

The adaptation was almost a shot-for-shot rendition of *The Exorcist* with the exclusion of all things Catholic; the priest was transformed into a medical doctor and the famous crucifix-magurbation scene was reproduced with a paper knife instead of a cross. The film's denouement finds the do-possessed girl in a mosque as religious Islamic music is heard. It may have been a copy, but *Seytan* was just different enough to reaffirm the Islamic belief in spirituality over

materialism.

Says Schneider: "Sometimes to our eyes the Turkish product can seem very cheesy, or it's hard for us to take it seriously and really appreciate it, but that's partly due to our own naivety about the specific cultural references that are being made. In other words, we're not getting the kinds of historical, cultural and social references that the filmmakers are inserting into the stories. So there's a lot of interesting stuff that we can only fully appreciate once we do our homework on the films."



## Indonesia

Indonesian horror films draw entirely from folkloric legends, which makes them the most faithful conduits of traditional customs and worries indigenous to the country's people, over any other country.

"What you have here is a really clear case of

a national cinema that's taking their existing folk tales and just putting them on the screen — using monsters and other figures that already exist and have existed for a long time in a literary and oral tradition," Schneider explains.

H. Tjut Djalil's *Mystics In Bali*, made in 1981, explores a mystical and mythical process (indigenous to Bali) called the *lesik*, which allows its practitioners to change into an assortment of objects.

Sisworo Gautama Putra's 1982 film *Mya Blorong Putri Wyi Loro Kidul* (*Hungry Snake Woman*) opens with a classic image of Indonesian horror — the mythical monster Queen Kidul (the "Snake Queen") praying to the gods for an offspring until a large snake egg appears. What follows is the birth of a beautiful blood-drenched woman with the soul of a serpent, a seductive murderess who often destroys her male prey following intercourse. Legend dictates that the Snake Queen, similar to the Djinn, exchanges earthly riches for the blood of her lovers. Not surprisingly, the story is a didactic tale about cultural attitudes towards selfishness and individuality, reflecting a traditional Indonesian belief that too much individuality causes death and the break up of the family.

## Indonesia

Bollywood: the biggest movie industry in the world, famous for over 650 loud and lavish mainstream song-and-dance epics per year, along with a slew of horror films that draw much of their inspiration from traditional Indian legends.

Exploitation shockmeisters Tuli and Shyam Ramsay are the brainchilds behind such '70s and '80s titles as the female monster movie *Aur Kaun*, the evil magician tale *Purana Mandir* and its sequel, the 3D-lensed *Seanni*. The Ramsay Brothers' films adopted North American genre tropes — vampires, werewolves and zombies — that, though foreign, proved to be successful among Indian viewers. Subsequently, they were responsible for making horror a commodity in the country.

"There are also a lot of ghost stories," notes Schneider of Bollywood horror. "Again, you're getting an example of existing folk tradition being used as the source material, tapping into pre-existing anxieties and social concerns and issues that are on the minds of the general audiences."

Nevertheless, it is the book's contention that Bollywood horror films tend to draw too heavily from Western horror to be distinctly Indian. The compiler's author, Pete Tombs, writes that, "It is like trying to dress up as your next door neighbor by taking the clothes left outside for the charity collection... most Indian horror seems second-hand, threadbare and sadly lacking in



A Bollywood vampire in *Khooni Panja*

contemporary gloss and cultural depth."

Schneider, however, insists that there is much in Indian cinema that is of value, even though he maintains that North American audiences aren't quite ready for it.

"The problem is that North American audiences tend to have certain expectations when they pay their money in terms of what the film is actually going to look like," he says, "and a lot of Indian horror's special effects in particular might not be up to what we consider to be a reasonable standard. So most general audiences and viewers might not give it the same kind of chance and not really pay as much attention to the actual narrative. It's a tricky thing."

## South Korea



With fierce, eclectic and genuinely chilling films like Tae-Yong Kim and Kyu-Dong Min's *Memento Mori*, Kim In-soo's *Bloody Beach*, Park Ki-Hyung's *Secret Tears*, Yoon Jong-chae's *Sorim* and Kim Ki-Duk's *The Isle*, South Korean horror has become one of few international horror scenes making a serious dent in North America.

South Korea is responsible for some of the finest, most imaginative horror films on the market, and the future looks even better: Recent entries like *The Ring Virus* and *Phone* reveal a strong preoccupation with the supernatural, an important element of Korean lore that has produced films with an emphasis on atmosphere.

"Visually and stylistically it seems like they've made a really big leap," Schneider concurs, "and they're certainly competitive right now

with some of the big-budget Hollywood films that you see and they're on par with the Japanese cinematically."

The West's growing attraction to South Korean horror lies in the extreme nature of its horrors, both visually and psychologically. *Tell Me Something* and *The Isle* in particular feature brutal female psychotics who have been pushed to the edge, something curiously absent from North American horror films.

## Poland

Historically, Polish genre films have been elusive and yet they remain strikingly original. Many of them are art house films influenced by the post-World War renaissance, and few have made it out of the country to reach

western shores, despite a Polish connection to Andrzej Zulawski (*Possession*) and the country's most commercially successful director, Roman Polanski.



Like Polanski's *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*, however, many Polish horror films aren't really culturally distinctive outside the fact that the directors who made them hail from that country.

"A lot of filmmakers that are cupped in Nathaniel Thompson's chapter on Polish horror are émigrés and are auteurist filmmakers who haven't made a lot of their films in Poland," Schneider explains.

Nevertheless, he is quick to point out that,

taken as a whole, these films do reveal a uniquely Polish perspective.

"There is a Polish tradition," he says, "and it is the use of fantasy. These are not generic horror movies at all, following the kind of westernized conventions that we get over here. It's much more about mixing fantasy elements and using surrealism. It's more Eastern European filmmaking that has a kind of horror edge to it. That's what a lot of the stuff coming out of Poland is about."

Walerian Borowicz's *Dr Jekyll And His Women* is a fine example, a work of dream-like fantasy that infuses Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale with explicit violence and sexual aggression, down to an outrageous, knife-like phallus.

## The Philippines



The central focus of Filipino horror is the monster, and the proof is in a history of fright pictures dating back to the 1930s with the silents *The Ghost in the Cemetery*, *Mc Tana*, *The Elder of the Witches* and *The Child Monster*. Looking over the horror films of the Philippines, it becomes clear that they come in three types: ghost/occult, aswang/witch, and thriller/slasher. The aswang variety is closely linked to Philippine mythology and folklore and, as such, dominates the historical record, while the other sub-genres simply reflect the atmosphere of the time.

Don Escudero's *Impakto* (*The Devil*, 1996) is based on the legend of the *tyanak*, a blood-sucking devil who is born to people who defy god's will. In the film, Dr Sagrado, a failed physician opens up an abortion clinic and years later,



An atmospheric scene from South Korea's *Shiri*





## A VAMPIRE IN PAKISTAN

THE LIVING CORPSE (1967) DVD

Starring Habib, Rehan and Asad  
Directed by Khwaja Sarfraz  
Ventura/Mondo Macabro

The Dracula legend has been told and re-told countless times cinematically, but one of the most interesting adaptations hails from Pakistan. The first horror picture ever made in that country, *Zindagi Lash*, a.k.a. *The Living Corpse* was expected to fare terribly because the story had no cultural appeal for its people, but after the censors gave the film an X rating, the crowds were soon coming down in monsoon rains to see what all the hype was about.

In this adaptation of Stoker's novel, all aspects of Christianity are replaced by science (naturally, since Pakistan is almost entirely Muslim). Dracula (Rehan) is Professor Tabani, a Humphrey Bogart look-alike-mad-scientist-turned-vampire courtesy of one of his bubbling eldors. Though Rehan had never even seen a horror film at the time — much less a Hammer movie — he successfully translates the motions into the Pakistani milieu.

The long lost film blends traditional Pakistani culture and film into a hokey cocktail of long song and dance numbers, adept chiaroscuro filming, an even longer car chase sequence (this Drac can't transform into animals of the night, so he drives a cab instead), and a fight sequence that rivals the one in John Carpenter's *They Live* for sheer length.

All told, *The Living Corpse* is a bizarre but culturally enlightening film, and a must for vampire completists and world horror cinephiles. Ventura has just released a restored print of the film from the only negative in existence on their Mondo Macabro line.

The Fox Morquette



Coffin Joe brings his very unique brand of Cuban Satanism to the world stage.

his wife bears a *tyanak*. The finale finds him facing an onslaught of vengeful devils in a forest where he has buried all of the unborn fetuses. Though terribly difficult to find, Filipino horror films are still being made and still focus heavily on the aswang mythology, though with a more modern, clinical take.



Cuban horror cinema is almost an oxymoron because there are so few filmmakers from the country making genre films with the exception of underground filmmaker Jorge Molina, whose sinister character, Ze Do Ceico, has become a cult figure known in America as "Coffin Joe".

Among Molina's triumphs are *At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul*, *This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse* and the recently released *Molina's Test*, the latter a story of a young runaway couple who take refuge in a strange house and are soon thrown into a nightmare landscape of sex, violence and horror.

Even though Molina's exposure is limited, there is little doubt that he is one of the most interesting — and bravest — horror directors working today, given that it's extremely difficult to get movies made in Cuba that are not sanctioned by the government. Molina's transgressive mix of horror, sex and religion has set him apart on the international stage and elevated him to cult superstardom.

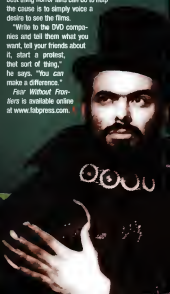
"It's even dangerous for Molina to make movies that are in a lot of ways kind of condemning or challenging the status quo," says Schneider. "I had the opportunity to interview him in New York for the book and he's not just a brilliant film mind — the guy has seen everything and is extremely passionate — but he's also

very courageous to make these kinds of movies."

Though hard to find, these terrors from around the world are not completely out of reach. In fact, there is a growing interest in even the most exotic and unknown horror films from fans in North America and, thankfully, companies are coming out of the woodwork to address that demand — Ventura, Barrel Entertainment, Synapse, Unearthed Films, All Day Entertainment, Fantoma, Blue Underground, Anchor Bay and so on. Nevertheless, Schneider advises the best thing horror fans can do to help the cause is to simply voice a desire to see the films.

"Write to the DVD companies and tell them what you want, tell your friends about it, start a protest, that sort of thing," he says. "You can make a difference."

Fear Without Frontiers is available online at [www.fabpress.com](http://www.fabpress.com).



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Who would have thought that giving  
Santa Claus a murderous make-over  
could cause so much controversy?



# Violetide TERROR

*In Loving Memory of the  
Christmas Slasher*

*by Adam Rockoff*

Throw together a bunch of horror fans with a bent for the extreme and undoubtedly they'll begin to gripe about the censorship of our beloved genre. Though this issue has always been a rallying cry for fandom solidarity, efforts to ban films have always been far more annoying and oftentimes amusing rather than truly damaging. Sure, a particularly nasty film like *I Spit On Your Grave* might spawn a protest or two, but generally, none of us have any problems viewing whatever our dark little hearts desire. After all, this ain't England. Of course, there's the exception to every rule, and in this case, the exception was a tiny film which caused TriStar Pictures a major headache around Christmas, 1984.

Shot in Utah, of all places, for no more than \$750,000, *Silent Night, Deadly Night* was directed by Charles E. Sellier, Jr., creator of the *Grievously Adams* franchise. The film is based on the grim novel *Slayride*, which was also the film's working title. After witnessing his parents' brutal murder at the hands of a robber dressed as Santa Claus, young Billy is sent to a Catholic orphanage, where the sadistic punishment meted out by Mother Superior does little to cure the boy's pathological fear of Father Christmas (surprise?). Not exactly the most well-adjusted young man, Billy eventually snaps, dons a Santa outfit and—armed with an axe—goes about doling out his own unique brand of

Christmas cheer. Needless to say, the film stirred up quite an uproar from all angles.

Even before *Silent Night, Deadly Night* was released in theatres, the film's television commercial created a firestorm of controversy. Irate parents called television stations and newspapers, demanding that the ads be pulled on the grounds that their children were being traumatized. A Milwaukee-based group calling itself Citizens Against Movie Madness picketed theatres that showed the film, holding posters which read, "Santa Does Not Slay." In New York, similar protests spawned such boni mots as "Deck the Halls with Holly, Not Bodies" and "Santa's Not a Hyman."

Newspapers fueled the fury, printing articles in which ordinary parents bemoaned having to answer such uncomfortable questions as, "Mommy, why is Santa trying to kill someone?" One Illinois woman's nine grandchildren didn't want anything for Christmas because they didn't know if the deliverer would be a good or bad Santa Claus. The situation became so heated that a Vermont elementary school principal called the film "a form of child abuse." Eventually, the negative publicity proved more than TriStar could handle and the film's entire West Coast run was scrapped. Many individual theatres also decided to can the film, and television stations banned the commercials.

The film's principals, initially taken aback by the ensuing controversy, were not immune to the hubbub. In a *Time* magazine article, Robert Brian Wilson, who plays the killer, said "They pushed the story out the door and replaced it with gore. I told friends and family with kids not to go see it." Even Sellier admits to "inadvertently making a film that had an impact that I wasn't expecting, it created an awareness in me that I had to be more careful and more responsible and more understanding of what I did."

TriStar, however, had the last laugh. In only three days, the film made \$1.4 million on less than 400 screens, paving the way for four sequels. In one of the more wonderfully ironic stories about the film, a few weeks after its release, the *Washington Post* quoted a furious Mickey Rooney saying of the film's producers, "How dare they! The scum who made that movie should be run out of town." Scarcely seven years later, you'll never guess who showed up in *Silent Night, Deadly Night Part 5: The Toy Maker!* You got it... Mickey Rooney. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the entire broahaha, was that *Silent Night, Deadly Night* was only the latest in a long line of nearly identical mad Santa films which had been launched over a decade earlier by the old media whipping boy, EC Horror Comics.

In 1972, flush from the success of their previous anthologies, *Dr. Terror's House of*

*The situation became so heated that a Vermont elementary school principal called the film "a form of child abuse."*

*Horrors* (1964) and *Torture Garden* (1967), Amicus Films released a theatrical version of the classic horror comic *Tales from the Crypt*. The film's first story, *And All Through The House* starred Joan Collins as a cold-blooded murderess menaced by an escaped mental patient dressed as Santa. Originally published in a 1954 issue of the comic *Fault of Horror*, rather than in the film's namesake, the story was chosen as the premiere episode for HBO's 1989 foray into EC Horror riches, the wildly successful television series, *Tales from the Crypt*. Far more graphic than its '70s counterpart, the new version starred director Robert Zemeckis' wife, Mary Ellen Trainor, and *LA Law*'s Larry Drake as the wide-eyed psycho Kris Kringle.

Although its holiday relevance is limited to its title, there's no denying that 1973's seasonal offering, *Silent Night, Bloody Night* is one bizarre film. Watching it is like sleepwalking through a sepia-toned nightmare. The film employs the talents of Warhol Factory staples, Candy Darling, Ondine and Mary Woronov, who at one time was married to the film's director, Theodore Gershuny. Even John Carradine comes out to play in this old-fashioned tale of

Gothic madness, which implements many of the stylistic techniques found barely a year later in the Christmas horror film's most revered offering, 1974's *Black Christmas* (a.k.a. *Silent Night, Evil Night*).

Possibly handicapped by a title which may have erroneously sold it as a blaxploitation flick, Bob Clark's Toronto-lensed *Black Christmas* was the director's third horror outing following *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1972) and *Deathdream* (1973). Putting a premium on production values and talent, Clark cast such rising stars as Olivia Hussey—who had made a splash as the star-crossed lover in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*—Margot Kidder and Keir Dullea. Although the great character actor Edmund O'Brien was forced to bow out due to complications from late-stage Alzheimer's, the production was blessed with a stroke of luck as John Saxon arrived at a moment's notice, lines fully memorized, to fill the pivotal role of the police inspector.

From its tour de force opening point of view shot (which paved the way for token "slasher POV" to come) to the old "killer-calling-from-inside-the-house" bit, which preceded *When a Stranger*



## Holiday Horror TRIVIA!

In *And All Through the House*, Mary Ellen Trainor's bloodcurdling, episode-ending scream was inserted at the suggestion of EC Comics legend, Bill Gaines.

In *Black Christmas*, comedian Gilda Radner was forced to drop out of the role which ultimately went to Andrea Martin when she nabbed a spot on *Saturday Night Live*.

According to director Lewis Jackson, both Kathleen Turner and Glenn Close were turned down for roles in *You Better Watch Out*. However, Patricia Richardson of *Home Improvement* fame, did not a small part.

The plot of the small plane in *To All A Goodnight* is played by porn star Harry Reems, best known for such adult classics as *Deep Throat* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*.

Don't Open Till Christmas producer Steve Minasian was a former partner in Hallmark Releasing which financed *Last House on the Left*. After teaming up with Dick Randall in the early '80s, the duo also produced such slasher favorites as *Pieces* (1983) and *Slaughter High* (1985).

In *Silent Night, Deadly Night*'s most infamous scene, the panties which Linnea Quigley is wearing when she is impaled on a pair of deer antlers, belonged to the wife of director Charles Seller. Quigley did not wear underwear, and Seller realized that a certain low-angle shot would be a bit more revealing than he anticipated unless he could quickly come up with a pair of panties. After the scene, Ms. Seller opted not to have them returned.



Joan Collins stars as a murderess who gets her just desserts at the hands of a psychotic Santa in *All Through the House*.



Calls by a good five years, *Black Christmas* prefigures many of the slasher film's most successful conventions.

According to Clark, John Carpenter – the man whose 1978 masterpiece *Halloween* would make the most of these conventions – once broached the subject of a sequel to *Black Christmas*. Although Clark had no interest in such a project, when Carpenter pressed him as to what a sequel might entail, Clark suggested that the film's killer escape from captivity and return to the sorority house the next fall. The kicker: he planned to call the film *Halloween*. While the "official" version of *Halloween*'s genesis runs contradictory to this tale, the two films are similar in that their craftsmanship transcends the slash-

er formula which would come to dominate the horror film for the better part of the next ten years.

Never turning away from painting any of the beloved holidays with swaths of crimson – Valentine's Day (*My Bloody Valentine*), New Year's (*New Year's Evil*), April Fool's Day (*April Fool's Day*) – the slasher film recognized the potential in depicting Santa as a homicidal maniac years before the controversy over *Silent Night, Deadly Night*. In fact, the first director to take advantage of this deliciously sinister premise was NYU Film School grad Lewis Jackson, whose yuletide slasher *You Better Watch Out* hit theatres in 1980 where it played in 42nd Street grindhouses. Retitled *Terror in Toyland* and *Christmas Evil* for home video, the film was recently released on the Troma label, where the commentary by star Brandon Maggart (father of pop star Fiona Apple) is one of the most unintentionally funny extras you'll ever hear.

Maggart plays a Christmas-obsessed nut forever scared by witnessing his father, in full Santa garb, going down on his mother right under the mistletoe. As a result, he takes it upon himself to punish those who don't embody his traditional idea of "Christmas spirit." Following the obligatory killing spree, all his ho ho-ing comes to

an abrupt end in a climax so hallucinatory that you'll wonder if someone dropped acid in your egg nog.

Then there was the directorial debut of David Hess, who was eager to dispel his onscreen persona, having been forever typecast as the sadist in such films as *Last House on the Left* and *House on the Edge of the Park*. When his friend, actor Jay Rasumny, introduced him to some folks at the Intercontinental Releasing Corporation, a company planning to release four \$75,000 direct-to-video features, Hess jumped at the opportunity to step behind the camera. Shot over the course of two weeks in the fall of 1980 at a Santa Barbara mansion, Hess' entry, *To All A Goodnight*, ended up being the most successful of the four films. He even threw in a novel twist by letting loose two killer Santas on a group of co-eds. Despite an alcoholic cameraman and some arguments with writer Alex Rebar – best known as the star of *The Incredible Melting Man* – Hess always felt that his directorial debut was much better than people gave it credit for. At the very least, the film has some truly bizarre touches: a bony couple chasing each other around a ping-pong table as foreplay, a detective who looks and sounds more like a used car salesman from Brooklyn and a batty house mom who can't understand why anyone should be in danger with a murderer loose on the premises. Equally bizarre is Dick Randall and Steve Minasian's 1984 production, *Don't Open Till Christmas*, which after a simple but creepy credit sequence turns the format on its head by featuring a lunatic travelling around England murdering people who are dressed as Santa. But, as they say, all good things must come to an end. As beloved as these titles are, the subgenre – along with old saint Nick – is taking a much needed sabbatical. Barring another installment of the *Silent Night, Deadly Night* series, it looks as if we've seen the last of the Christmas horrors, which is perfectly suitable since the best ones have already been made. After all, what's left when *The Santa Clause* and its sequel, starring comedian Tim Allen as the films' jolly hero, can gross nearly \$300 million. Now that's terrifying. ☹

Holiday horrors *Don't Open TIL Christmas* (top) and *Silent Night Deadly Night* (left).



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# The Weird and Wicked World of GRIS GRIMLY

by Jen Vuckovic



Over 150 years ago, before Walt Disney brought his sanitized tales of fairy princesses and evil queens, Heinrich Hoffman, the Frankfurt "medical man of the lunatic asylum" wrote and illustrated his classic children's book, *Strawwelpeter*, for his son at Christmas. Hoffman's intent was to create didactic tales to fuel the imaginations of his own children; to scare them into obedience with stories that were dark and unusually twisted. *Strawwelpeter* (see *RM#10*) was so popular that it went on to be translated into 30 different languages and capitalized on the success of *Grimm's Popular Stories* that came before it, stories in which Cinderella's step-sisters hacked off their toes and heels to fit into the glass slipper and Rumpelstiltskin took hold of his left foot and ripped himself up the middle in two.

Those times may be gone, but the sensibility that drove them is still alive in the modern work of storytellers like Gris Grimly, who continues to explore the dark underbelly of childhood, remembering the effect both Grimm's fairytales and Hoffman had on him as a child. And the latest installment in the legacy of dark children's literature is *Gris Grimly's Wicked Nursery Rhymes*, a new book of rancorous rhymes and demented designs that begs to be devoured by the young and old alike.

"Growing up I always wanted to be an illustrator," says Grimly. "Most of my influences come from comic book artists like Dave McKean [*Sandman*], Jamie Hewlett [*Tank Girl*] all the old EC artists [*Ghastly*] Graham Ingels and Jack Davis. Edward Gorey is also a big influence on my style,

"The spooky vibe in my work comes from the darker side of my soul."

obviously, but specifically Charles Addams [*Charles Addams' Nursery Rhymes*] was the biggest influence on this particular book and, of course, Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* and The Brothers Grimm."

*Wicked Nursery Rhymes* is a 32-page, fully illustrated volume of original nursery rhymes that spins beloved classics into morbid tales to tell the tykes. In the book, Little Miss Muffet meets her doom after she gets locked in the cellar by her parents for torturing animals; Jack and Jill run up the hill to commit a murder-suicide; and Little Bo-Peep gets carnivorous with her flock of sheep. The author admits that the book was a potential threat to publishers (Baby Tattoo Books) because of its subject matter and, consequently, is being promoted as an adult humour book. Nevertheless, Grimly maintains that he wouldn't have a problem giving his *Wicked Nursery Rhymes* to a ten-year-old.

"This book is no different than anything that was available 100 years ago, and children were doing just fine back then," the author/illustrator affirms. "They certainly weren't killing each other over Grimm's Fairytales."

Unlike his forefathers, Grimly also draws from a host of darker more modern sensibilities, notably those of genre artists Tim Burton, Clive Barker and Benue Wrightson and movies like *Nosferatu*, *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *House of Wax*, *Suspiria*, John Carpenter's *The Thing* and *The Shining* and directors like Roger Corman, Alfred Hitchcock and William Castle.

"The spooky vibe in my work comes from the darker side of my soul I guess," he admits. "I would draw whatever came naturally into my head and my mom would say, 'You've got to stop drawing monsters.' So this one time I drew a big hairy guy with fangs and my mom said 'Didn't I tell you to stop drawing monsters?' To which I replied, 'Mom, that's not a monster, it's a mutant.'"

Grimly's *Wicked Nursery Rhymes* is the fourth in similarly-themed storybooks by the author (the others include *Pinocchio*, *The Cockatrice Boys*, and *Monster Museum*), but his first effort at both writing and illustrating. Look for his latest, available at bookstores along with a line of T-shirts and PVC toys based on the book. Visit the Mad Creator's website at [www.madcreator.com](http://www.madcreator.com) for more information on all things Grimly. ●



THE NEXT DAY THE MAIDENS WERE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND  
and Mary had a new garden planted in the ground.



JILL PUSHED JACK UNTO HIS DEATH  
WHEN HE HAD PAUSED TO CATCH HIS BREATH.

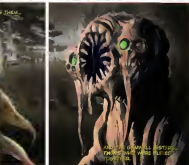




Storyboard artist turned comic creator PETE VON SHOLLY brings horror and humour to live-action comics.

# THE RETRO HORROR PICTURE SHOW

by Gary Butler



Something wicked this way comes – something wickedly funny, too. Pete Von Sholly is a California-based artist with a truly morbid sense of humour. And the same goes for his take on irony. How morbidly ironic or ironically morbid is this guy, you ask? Well, enough to make him think that there's a market for a live-action comedy creature comic called, you guessed it, *Morbid* (title treatment in a "blood dripping" font, natch).

Released in October by Dark Horse comics, *Morbid* is comprised of twelve tall tales featuring taller monsters, rendered entirely in sequential, photographed (and PhotoShopped) images. Some of Von Sholly's stories are as short as a handful of pages, while epic-length adventures warrant either side of a dozen. The spirit? Pure bastard offspring of Forrest Ackerman and William Gaines (hence, protagonists such as Harry Hauser and P. Don Sheets, respectively, not to mention the fact that Von Sholly refers to his mini-movies as "retro-classic pictures").

"Originally, I wanted to make a straight-up horror photo comic," Von Sholly says, over the phone from his California workshop. "In the first stories I did, which date back to 1999, I used a punning host character, until I thought, 'Maybe that's worn out its welcome – maybe it's more trouble than it's worth.' But because I'd been experimenting with the comedy format, I didn't feel so literally morbid all the time. And the stories themselves just started veering towards the humorous."

Where a path of unadulterated (not to mention unfunny) darkness would have taken Von Sholly is not for us to know – though *Roe Morgue* speculates that it might very well have led the man straight to the gates of Heck.

"I think of *Mad* magazine," he says. "'Mad' can mean angry, crazy or zany, but once you lay eyes on the cover, you immediately understand what it's about."

Which goes some way to explaining why *Morbid*'s cover sports a guy in a fish suit (talk about swimwear issues!).

"*Morbid* is one of those strange, eerie, weird words," he adds, "except that it's one that hasn't been used a lot. It goes without saying that when I was pitching the book, most publishers thought that it would put people off."

Some four years since he started conceiving his live-action photostories, Von Sholly has created over 400 pages of maniacally mad monster mayhem, over 90 of which are finally seeing the light of distributed day thanks to the *Morbid* anthology. Whether the comic crowd is open-minded enough to embrace Von Sholly's masterful mix of heasties and buffoonery remains to be seen, but one thing's for sure – the stuff looks stellar. *Morbid* might be slapstick, but there's nothing slap-dash about it.

"I strive for realism as much as possible," Von Sholly says, pointing out that realism and ridiculousness are not mutually exclusive. "I understood that the only way these stories can work is if they look right."

It goes without saying that the most important criterion is that the monsters look right; words and the best of intentions simply aren't enough when your cast of characters includes the spider/scorpion named "Scoopamantula," the babe/behemoth known as "SHEheemoth" and – thus holding writer's fave – the puppy/penske called "The Werewig".

Von Sholly works exclusively with two sculptors, one being his wife Andrea – a designer who has created monsters for two horrifically hypnated movies, *Bride of Re-Animator* and *Scooby-Doo*.

"They sculpt very detailed mini-monsters, which we paint and photograph," Von Sholly says. "It's that simple – not to suggest that these projects are simple! I'd be great to make body castings and go all-out, but there's no budget behind this stuff."

Indeed, until *Morbid* became a published reality, all of Von Sholly's four years of work had been purely speculative, which makes the aforementioned fact that he churned out 400-plus pages of the stuff (at an average rate of one-to-two weeks per eight-page story) all the more astonishing.

"If Dark Horse does well with this, let's just say that I'm already ready



"Loch Styx is a good example of a random page in terms of how I work with images and collage," Von Sholly says. "[Panel 1:] The underwater shot is a painting, that's someone's real hand; and the boat is just a shadow out of focus. [Panel 2:] The guys in the boat were not photographed together, so I had to be careful to keep the lighting consistent. And the water is actually a scanned shot of Loch Ness. You could say, 'Water's water,' but I wanted it to be authentically scary water. [Panel 3:] The monster is a prehistoric sea scorpion called 'Euryptid'; they were six-to-eight feet long when they existed. Ours was scared down and sculpted entirely out of metal. And yeah, we built the whole thing, not just the cloth."



for volumes 2, 3 and 4," he threatens. "And I have a bunch more in the drawn out stage. A lot of the *CHIGWOM* stunts are called from these unpublished pages."

Ah, *CHIGWOM*. In the flurry of *Morbid*-ity, did we forget to mention it?

"It stands for Crazy Hip Groovy Go-Go Way Out Minsters," Von Sholly laughs (maniacally, we suspect). And yes, it's an intentional mouthful. Also released in October (in this case by Two Morrows publishing), *CHIGWOM* is a one-off, spot-on parody of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Naturally, it exclusively uses images from Von Sholly's (as-yet) unpublished work.

While *Morbid*, *CHIGWOM* and *Loch Stryx* wade in the waters of dark humour, *Nearly Departed* trends in the downright black stuff. But is there a line that's too offensive for Von Sholly to cross?

"In the *Morbid* story Judgement On Planet Ex, the character Vip Spang puts on X-ray glasses, looks at a girl's butt and comments on how cool the future is," he says. "I originally did it with a naked butt shot, but that did something to the story; I thought it was cutesy with panties on. It was still pretty nude, but when it's completely nude, it turns into something else. So, yeah, in some cases, I pull back. But basically, my mind doesn't run that way. Maybe that's why all of my work has this humorous bent – maybe I'm just not that morbid!"

Maybe not. But as the introduction to *Yuggoth Calling* so eloquently puts it: "Arkham if they can't take a joke."

For more information on Pete Von Sholly visit [www.vonshollywood.com](http://www.vonshollywood.com).



*Nearly Departed* – taken from Von Sholly's fully-fleshed-out story based on the implicit consummation in the title *Bride of Re-Animator*.

"I was a huge *Re-Animator* fan, and both my wife and I worked on *Bride*," Von Sholly says. (Pre-*Morbid*, Von Sholly storyboarded movies, including *A Nightmare on Elm Street II: Dream Warriors*, *Bride of Re-Animator*, *Darkman* and *Mars Attacks!*) "I tried to convince Brian Yuzna to do *Son of Re-Animator*, and I wrote a script. My goal was to equal, if possible, that famous *Re-Animator* image of the disembodied head. I figured that copulating with half a body would be impressive. Hey, if you're gonna do a *Re-Animator* movie, it needs that kind of content."

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# CINEMACABRE

## MASSACRE IN TEXAS REVISITED

### THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Starring Jessica Biel, Johnathan Tucker and Eric Balfour

Directed by Marcus Nispel

Written by Tim Henkell, Tobe Hooper and Scott Kosar

First off, let's get something straight: like many of you, I loathe remakes. With the exception of the exceptional John's Carpenter's *The Thing* and Cronenberg's *The Fly*, rarely has a remake been crafted that has rivaled a gritty, nostalgic horror film of yesteryear — in part because we hold them so close to our hearts. So when I heard that not only was Tobe Hooper's frightening backwoods classic suffering the Hollywood remake treatment, but that it was being helmed by a man whose only previous directorial efforts to date were Janet Jackson's *Design of a Decade* video and *Faith No More's* *Video Croissant*, I wanted to jump in front of a bus. What sacrilege!

I was so vehemently opposed to the idea that I would hardly even look at the trailer (which, in my mind, would have been utter goat shit no matter what they put together). But one fateful day I found myself at a press screening of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and here is my unbelievable account.

John Larroquette returns for a reprise voice-over at the beginning of the film to explain the gruesome events of the "based on a true story" mass murder case in the reddest corner of Texas to set up the tone of the film, which I expected to be a sanitized, teen sleeping pill. Actually, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* turned out to be more of a re-imagining than a remake, so it's unfair to compare the two even if it's well-nigh impossible not to. It's surprisingly well-shot, with

more art direction and shows a helluva lot more blood than the original ever did (not that it was necessary, but there are some really good wince-inducing scenes!). The story has unfortunately been altered a good deal, which will likely make it less frightening to horror aficionados, but not to the rest of the world.

In the new story, five teenagers on their way home from a weed run in Mexico pick up a bloodied girl (whose character doesn't hold a candle to Edwin Neal's freaky head-cheese talking outjob). After she blows her own brains out because the van is "going the wrong way," the kids run out of gas and go in search of the sheriff (played by a depraved R. Lee Ermey) for help. Of

course there is a family of crazed cannibals and the teenagers find themselves besieged by a chainsaw-wielding madman, but it's nevertheless a very different movie. There is no family dinner scene, Leatherface shows us his ugly mug at one point, and Harry Knowles even rears his head for a cameo, but the movie was still entertaining to watch overall.

Now here's the key: if I hadn't already seen the original film, and wasn't desensitized from a lifelong horror addiction, I think I might have even been frightened by some of it. Get my drift? When the aforementioned *The Thing* remake was released in 1982, many people my age had never seen the original, we had nothing to compare it to, so it was a brilliant masterpiece to us — and still is. The same phenomenon will undoubtedly occur here with TCM, and rightly so because the film is not, as I expected, utter goat shit. Even hardcore fans of the original have warmed up to this version. It's hard to believe, but it's all based on a true story, I swear.

Jen Vuckovic

## ALL BULLETS, NO BLOOD

### UNDERWORLD

Starring Kate Beckinsale, Scott Speedman and Shane Brolly

Directed by Len Wiseman

Written by Danny McBride, Kevin Grevioux and Len Wiseman

Screen Gems

Cutting down *Underworld* for being a mainstream Hollywood film is about as easy as bewitching a wannabe vampire with the promise of eternal life. But really, what's the point? The makers never promised anything more than a shoot-'em-up action movie wrapped in latex, designed specifically to cash in on the box office success of *The Matrix* and *Blade II*. So if you're looking for a groundbreaking cinematic experience, you'll be in for a shock, which isn't so bad, since *Underworld* is so seriously lacking in shocks, spooks, or anything resembling thrills and chills.

Horror, it's definitely not. Still, the concept of modern, well-armed vam-



pires and werewolves at each other's throats provides an opportunity for small viewing pleasures. Castles. Lairs. Whips. Fast cars. A few tiny, high-tech twists; the Lycans can repel silver bullets from their bodies (a neat special effect), so they are shot with blood-boiling liquid silver nitrate. The vamps are targeted with bullets filled with UV rays.

But all the firepower – which explodes before we even know who to root for – detracts from the supernatural powers, turning *Underworld* into little more than a gangster story shot through a blue filter. Seline (Kate Beckinsale, who doesn't take that corset and catsuit off in the entire film, by the way – which I suppose is good news and bad news), suspects there's more going on than the latest chapter in a centuries-old feud. Her sleuthing is thwarted by Kraven (Brody), a complete nitwit.

Just when you're thinking, "who died and made you God?" the guy who actually did die and leave him in charge is resurrected (Viktor, played in various states of reanimation by Bill Nighy, actually verges on creepy). Power struggles ensue. A love triangle develops. Yawn. By the time we find out the movie is actually about racism and bio-engineering it's all over but the final showdown and promise of a sequel. Next time, I hope they pack less bullets and more blood.

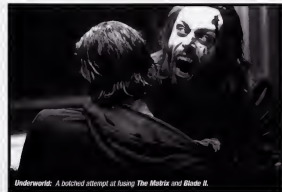
Lila Ladouceur

## ALFREDO HITCHCOCK WAS HERE

### IDENTITY

Starring John Cusack, Ray Liotta  
and Amanda Peet  
Directed by James Mangold  
Written by Michael Cooney  
Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment

Marketed as a "thriller" by execs at TriStar, *Identity* hit theatres earlier this year with a classic whodunit premise and some ingenious twists and turns to the plot. Nevertheless, the film received mixed reviews; like its kissing cousin, *Frailty*, much of the mainstream (and many horror fans too) didn't buy into it for whatever reason, and pretty much scrapped it in reviews. A shame



*Underworld: A botched attempt at fusing The Matrix and Blade II.*

because, even if you didn't like *Identity*, you'd have to admit that being able to successfully draw from the works of Agatha Christie (specifically *Ten Little Indians*) and Alfred Hitchcock (specifically *Psycho*) is worth half marks right off the bat.

Penned – unbelievably – by the same guy who gave us *Jack Frost* and *Jack Frost 2: Revenge of the Mutant Killer Snowman*, *Identity* strands ten strangers in a Bates Motel during a major downpour; among them movie star Caroline (Rebecca DeMornay), her limo driver Ed (Cusack), Rhodes the cop (Liotta) and a hooker named Paris (Peet). Apparently, treacherous rainwater along a country road has independently forced them all – Ed along with a woman he accidentally ran over, her husband and child, and Rhodes along with a handcuffed criminal named Robert Maine – to stop by at the motel to get their bearings. Of course, not all is as it seems, and as the murders start to pile up one thing becomes increasingly clear: something other than chance has brought these people together.

At the risk of spoiling the movie for you, it's worth noting that the film's premise – and, for that matter, the entire marketing campaign – is little more than a red herring, but one that largely works in the story's favour. Hitchcock was called a genius for his ideas and even if those ideas are dated, there's no overlooking director James Mangold's ability to mimic him. Like Hitchcock, Mangold creates a precision clockwork of

characters with secrets, plenty of red herrings, a murder every fifteen minutes and an ending with a twist... make that two twists. The bottom line? *Identity* is expertly written, soaked in mood, surprisingly bloody and highly entertaining. Good anytime but better on a rainy day.

Rod Gudino

## RETURN OF THE TERROR TOONS

### HAPPY TREE FRIENDS: SECOND SERVING

Starring Aubrey Ankrum, Michael Lipman  
and Dana Belben  
Directed by Rhode Montijo  
Written by Warren Graff  
Animation by Rhode Montijo and Kenn Navarro  
Mondo Media

Well kiss my grits, the *Happy Tree Friends* are back and, man, are they ever glutons for punishment! The kooky critters hore on the Internet have found a new home on DVD with this sequel to their original gore-soaked adventure, *Happy Tree Friends: First Blood* (see RM034). Just when you thought this cartoon couldn't get any more dangerous, our happy-dappy skittish little pixies appear in nineteen sick new episodes that will satiate your appetite with good old-fashioned cartoon violence served up on a no-holds-barred platter of icky gruesomeness.

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## Overlooked, Forgotten and Dismissed

This issue, we sail the Seas of Cheese to bring you the very worst in aqua-horror.

### HUMANIDS, ER, *AQUANOIDS* FROM THE DEEP

#### AQUANOIDS

##### Cinemacabre

Seems that back in '87, the good people of Santa Clara Island were getting chomped by a bunch of half-human, half-fish creatures called Aquenoids. Inexplicably, the fish-freaks are back and it's up to Vanessa the Jet Ski-riding, daisy duke-wearing environmentalist and her half-naked friends to warn the dullards of Babylon Beach before they become fish fodder. Unfortunately, they're up against the evil forces of the town's mayor, who's obviously seen *Jaws* and wants to protect the local tourist trade. The monster itself is a cool effect but its screen time is limited, sound quality is poor and the cast looks as though they walked off the set of a \$50 porno. You've been warned.

Body Count: 16

Burst Testicles: 1

References to Other Water-Based Horror Films: 8



### FLYING FILET-O-FISH AND RE-HASH BROWNS

#### PLANKTON

##### Shriek Show

Shriek Show decided to flog this stanky dead fish – also known as *Creatures From the Abyss* and *Plankton 4* – one more time by repackaging and hiring a chimp to rename it. Five over-sexed Italian teenagers row out to sea in a small boat only to become lost in a storm. Luckily, they discover an abandoned scientific research boat with a laboratory specifically tailored for mad science. After some obligatory sex, the hapless and half-witted cast is attacked by flying, yes, flying cannibalistic fish that live out of water. With cool *Evil Dead* effects and poorly dubbed voices, it does make for light entertainment though the scare value is extremely shallow.

Body Count: 6

People Killed By Plankton: 0



Last Chance Lance

sive to the disc is called *Eyes Cold Lemonade* and features a blind mole mistaking his friend's eyeball for a lemon while making fresh juice – a little slice to dress the rim of the glass and, voila! Nothing like a tall glass of chilled aqueous humour to wet your whistle on a hot summer's day.

The new installments make litchy and Scratchy look like Davey and Goliath, with a smorgashord of morbid and hysterical ditties that are more fun than Mazola Twister. If you need further convincing that *Happy Tree Friends* is sick enough to call your own, go to [www.happytreefriends.com](http://www.happytreefriends.com) and check out the episode titled *Sweet Ride*, which stars my favourite friend Nutty the Squirrel, a hardcore sugar junkie who gets his head stuck in a bee hive while chasing down Cuddles the Bunney for his ice cream cone. Sounds pretty average for a cartoon, right? Wrong. Nutty gets stung so badly that the hive pops open and his face explodes in a shower of gore. Then the angry swarm flies out of his empty eye sockets after Cuddles, who gets quartered on a ladder and his half-head slides along the pavement right into the business end of the ice cream cone... that impales what's left of his eye. 'Nuff said? *Happy Tree Friends* is RM-recommended viewing for grown-ups of all ages and children who want to be serial killers when they grow up.

Jan Vuckovic

### THEY'RE ALL GOING TO LAUGH AT YOU!

#### CARRIE

Starring Angela Bettis, Patricia Clarkson and Kandyse McClure

Directed by David Carson

Written by Bryan Fuller, based on the novel by Stephen King  
MGM Home Entertainment

Yes, I have read Stephen King's novel *Carrie* and, yes, I have seen Brinn De Palma's movie version, but that was back in high school and that was a long time



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## THE SUPERFLUOUS SIMPSONS

### THE SIMPSONS TREEHOUSE OF HORROR

Starring Dan Castellaneta, Nancy Cartwright  
and Harry Shearer  
Fox Home Entertainment

Linked to Celtic Europeans and the Satanic angels of death, for centuries Halloween has been a time when the living seek convergence with the dead. But for the past fourteen years it has also marked the yearly union of my two fiercest earthly passions – the ghostly world of horror and the wacky world of Springfield. This curious single disc offering features four of *The Simpsons'* classic Treehouse of Horror anthologies along with a short best-of clips montage featuring slimy space-siblings Kang and Kodos. The best by far is Treehouse V, which includes the legendary Stephen King goof on *The Shining*, ops, I mean *The Shinning* ("Do you want to get sued?"). Watch for cameos by Freddy, Pinhead, Jason and some Universal Monsters after "no beer and no TV make Homer go crazy!"

Treehouse V also features the underrated Time And Punishment, in which Homer travels back in time via a magical toaster, wreaking havoc on the future with hilarious consequences! The next episode finds Homer going 2-dimensional with some erotic cakes in a Tree spoof and Bart duking it out with Groundskeeper Krueger in *A Nightmare On Evergreen Terrace*. Other highlights include the episode where Homer uses a horny leprechaun to do battle with a curse-happy gypsy (Hex And The City) and Pierce Brosnan fights dirty as a futuristic house vying to win Marge's love in 2001 mock-up *House Of Whacks*.

Despite my zombian dedication to all things Simpsons (if you're like me you've already seen these episodes some ten to fifteen times), this collection's about as superfluous as Krusty's infamous third nipple. With zero extras and an odd choice of seasons (5, 6, 7 and 12) you may want to save your "do'h" until they release a full set of the spooky satires with commentaries and bonus fare. Mind you, those complete season box sets are rolling out slower than Ralph Wiggum on Lithium so, in the meantime, you might want to treat yourself to this little poodle on the cheap. Either that, or just turn on your television, chances are one of them is on right now.

Tom Dracovich



ago. So let's just judge this TV version on its own merits, shall we? Okay, so it sucks.

My inherent opposition to remakes diminishes as I age. Look at the evidence: there's Howard Hawks' *The Thing From Another World* and John Carpenter's *The Thing*, Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and David Cronenberg's *The Fly*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Gus Van Sant's... okay, scratch that last one. The point is that multiple cinematic takes on compelling source material do not necessarily favour the original, and why not revisit a good idea in a different way? And let's be honest, De Palma's *Carrie* was not without its flaws.

That said, I did bring my own set of trepidations to this *Carrie*. Non-HBO TV movies are mostly horrible, populated by second-rate actors performing underwritten scripts for hack directors who aren't talented enough to make movies people would pay to see. That's a generalization, sure, but director David Carson does little to dispel it. His cast consists mostly of good looking but wooden twenty-somethings. Talented players, like Ginger Snaps' Katharine Isabelle, are given little to do or say. The special effects are not very special and Carson's direction is pedestrian at best, especially compared to De Palma's split-screened boldness.

So why watch it? Converts to the growing cult of Angels Bettis will be curious. The star of *May* displays much of the same vulnerability and hidden strength that characterized first-time director Lucky McKee's disturbed heroine. Her Carrie White is more determined and less naive than Sissy Spacek's; this Carrie knows what people think of her and accepts it with quiet resignation... at least until she starts to fathom the depths of her telekinetic powers. Kudos, too, to Patricia Clarkson as Carrie's religious fanatic mother. Her Margaret White is more modulated and therefore more sinister than Piper Laurie. But even these strengths don't justify this movie's existence. More of a retreat than a re-imagining, this *Carrie* can move cars and furniture, but not emotions.

Sean Plummer

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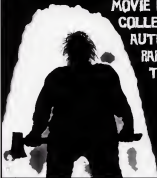


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# INDIE TERROR FEST!

BY NATHAN TYLER

## Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde

Redfield Arts Motion Picture Entertainment  
Contact: [studio@redfieldarts.com](mailto:studio@redfieldarts.com)

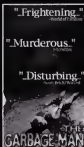
With *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, a new stab at Robert Louis Stevenson's classic saga of good versus evil, Baltimore writer/producer/director/actor Mark Redfield has crafted one of the most unique B-horror movies in recent memory, a full-on sophisticated costume drama with a true sense of abject terror. As an adaptation that is both intensely faithful to and decidedly dissident from the source material, *Jekyll & Hyde* manages to tell the tale and capture its atmosphere but also mixes things up and takes it to a whole other level with an original twist, and improves upon it, if that's at all possible. Starring Redfield himself in a tour-de-force performance that shines with intelligence and class, *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* also features an excellent ensemble cast, artful direction, baroque studio sets and majestic lighting, fashioning an early 20th century England full of magic, trepidation, violence and horror for its charming and scummy characters to wallow through. It's definitely not for all tastes – even that of horror fans – but for those with a little bit of patience, a love for classic suspense literature and a flair for the theatrical, this rare treat comes recommended.

## The Garbage Man

Boneyard Press

Contact: [bonedaddy@boneyardpress.com](mailto:bonedaddy@boneyardpress.com)

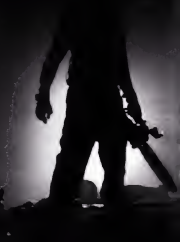
The directorial debut of notorious underground comic book publisher/scribe Hart D. Fisher, *The Garbage Man* is the raucous tale of a young man whose daily activities alternate between cleaning up the neighbourhood at his job and essentially murdering anyone who looks in his general direction. Really, this is one audacious bastard of a serial killer who'll shank someone in broad daylight in the middle of a busy parking lot for a pack of smokes, then turn around and slit some dude's throat in his kitchen, eat what's left of his breakfast burrito, and then steal his dog! But this isn't what makes the flick worth our time and ink; more than a comic slasher, *The Garbage Man* is an intelligent horror-drama that is well worth blowing chunks over even if it is, at times, a tad illogical.



## Headhunter

Alieca/Morgan Productions  
Contact: [fetinius@aol.com](mailto:fetinius@aol.com)

*Headhunter* is 33 minutes of chaos, carnage and cool. In the film, the flesh-eating undead have taken over the world until Big Brother calls in special task forces known as Headhunters to kick some zombie ass. A decade later, though, the plague lives on through black market trading and biological warfare, and the Headhunters are all but obsolete, save one mean bastard out for justice. Shot for lunch money with a novice cast and crew, *Headhunter* is an über-stylized and operatic piece, but it's a technically striking one. Alieca and Morgan, both film students at Boston's Emerson College, obviously spilled their fair share of blood, sweat and tears in putting this mini-epic together and, while it's no work of art, our hats go off to them for that old college try.



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# DEEP WITHIN THE CAULDRON OF FLESH

OF PSYCHOPATHS, MAD SCIENTISTS AND HAIRDRESSING WITCHES.  
THREE MORE SPOONFULS OF REDDENED FLESH GET SERVED UP IN THE CAULDRON.

BY MONICA KUEBLER

## SIN SISTERS Seduction Cinema

"If that love is not returned, it must be killed." A beautiful sentiment for homicide served up naked, hot and vicious. *Sin Sisters*, starring real-life sisters Misty and Chelsea Mundae, is surprisingly psychological given its obligatory low-budget smut trappings. Misty shines as Cynthia, a bad girl with a secret penchant for murder. When she kills a classmate in the showers of her university, a fateful chain of events is set in motion for her and her sister



Morgana (Chelsea) to dispose of the body. It's a chain that leads them directly to Juli's cottage (sic) and her very deliberate "game" of erotic survival (makes perfect sense. *Ed*).

Soon, the sin sisters find themselves pitted against each other in an escalating competition of orgasms, dark confessions and death. Despite the über-realistic storyline (cause, you know, this kind of thing happens all the time), Misty makes psychopaths look pretty darn good. Brimming with bloody budgeonings, schoolgirl kitz, bondage and character assassinations, *Sin Sisters* turns out to be a decent sexual thriller. Now that's shocking.

## DR. JEKYLL & MISTRESS HYDE Seduction Cinema

There is no *Jekyll* nor *Hyde* in this film (mistar or mistress). The title is simply an allusion to that which the plot is cribbed from—with the obligatory nude twist, of course. Dr. Jackie (Julian Wells) has a theory that all women's psyches are at war—pure versus lustful (*I thought that was a proven fact. -Ed*). It becomes her obsession to develop a drug which separates the two parts and, to that end, starts up some experiments of the mad scientist variety. When her first test subject descends into insanity, she does what any rationalist scientist would do—injects herself. The drug, *Euphoria*, morphs the bookish shrink into a spasming sex kitten who seduces a young prostitute (Misty Mundae) then plots to kill her cheating husband.

Dr. *Jekyll* and *Mistress Hyde* tries

hard to play into a gamut of fantasies, giving us a striptease (mmm), a lap dance (yawn), doctor/patient sex (lulz...) and, of course, a token naughty school girl. Mundae steels the show as wannabe actresse-cum-hooker-cum something entirely different, but I guess that's no surprise to you Seduction Cinema diehards.



## THE WITCHES OF SAPPHO SALON Seduction Cinema

Strip the usual Seduction Cinema smut of its slapstick never-funny humour, infuse the cast with some new blood, conjure up a plot involving ritual human sacrifice (with scissors!) and you'll get this: a trio of beauty-obsessed, Satan-ic witches who run a salon that caters to the hair, nails and dormant carnal desires of its female clientele. However, once every thirty years, the witches go all *Countess Bathory* for a day and require the sacrifice of a virgin with a specific astrological background. Nothing like a blood bath to exfoliate those pores. Cue Janet (Elizabeth Grace), a girl with too many morals and just the right birthday.

The *Witches of Sappho Salon* is what you'd expect for a horror-themed all-girl (and one gay hairdresser) party: lots of blood, some penis disembowelment issues, and a nod to *There's Something About Mary's* sperm used as hair gel—only this time, it's "girl juice". Make of that what you will. *A*



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This Fall, Blue Underground dishes up four lesser-known, sleazy titles that horror icon CHRISTOPHER LEE would rather you forget....

# The Reluctant Monster Revisited

by Sean Plummer and Jen Vuckovic

You love him but he wishes you wouldn't, at least not in the way that you do. We don't really need to give you the lowdown on Chris Lee, the 61-year-old Hammer horror icon with 200-plus movies under his belt — and if you're still unsure of who we're talking about, come closer so we can hit you over the head with a mallet because he's played Dracula ten times — but here's a meaty morsel horror fans might not know about: Lee's burgeoning ambitions ran more towards the likes of highbrow theatre (like *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, but, much to his chagrin, late cast him as *Dracula* and *The Mummy*).

Modern audiences will recognize him as the evil wizard Saruman in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and as Count Dooku in the new *Star Wars* films, but as the all-new interview contained within Blue Underground's Christopher Lee Collection reveals, the man who was many monsters isn't exactly proud of most of it. What comes across strongly in the interview is Lee's reluctant horror hero status. His distaste for horror in general, and his consummate professionalism. We may love him, but the feeling is not necessarily mutual. Regret's a bitch ain't it?

Presented here are four of his lesser-known works: *The Blood of Fu Manchu* (1968), *The Castle of Fu Manchu* (1968), *Circus of Fear* (1966) and *The Bloody Judge* (1970), three of which are directed by the great Jesus (Jess) Franco (who was once declared one of the most dangerous filmmakers for Catholics by the Catholic Church, along with Luis Buñuel). The other common denominator in this box set is producer Henry Alan Towers, who wrote or co-wrote all four films under the pseudonym Peter Welbeck, and has had a long-standing relationship producing Franco's films with Lee as a favourite (Towers later produced the early '90s *Star-Jack Holmes* TV miniseries with none other than Lee in the titular role).

Love 'em or hate 'em (and my guess is you'll lean towards the latter on these titles with the exception of *The Bloody Judge*), Blue Underground has done an ace job of farting up these dubious efforts. Each is presented uncensored as possible, in widescreen, and contains inept background materials, including a director commentary on *Circus* and new interviews with Towers, Lee and Franco. Onward, *Rue Morgue* soldier; through a brief look at the tawdry titles the dear old monster would rather not talk about.

## CIRCUS OF FEAR (1966) DVD

Directed by John Moxey

*Circus of Fear* is an entertaining ensemble piece that casts Lee as Gregor, a disfigured lion tamer who isn't just hiding his face. In fact, everyone in Barberini's circus has something to hide. As the police hunt for the money lost during a daring daylight robbery on London's Tower Bridge, we get a glimpse into the inner workings of the circus, including the jealousies instigated by the lovely Gina (Margaret Lee), the blackmailing of the towering Gregor by the dwarf known as Mr. Big (Skip Martin), and the skulking presence of one of the robbers (a young but still creepy Klaus Kinski).

Blue Underground's print restores the 22 minutes cut for its American release as *Psycho Circus*. Lee fans don't get much of their hero (his still expressive face is hidden behind a black ski mask much of the time), but seeing him in a non-villain role is worth your dime.

## THE BLOOD OF FU MANCHU (1968) DVD

Directed by Jess Franco

Lee played pulp writer Sax Rohmer's Oriental super villain, Fu Manchu, five times with diminishing returns. The fourth in the series, and first directed by Franco, is something of a retread of 1966's *Brides of Fu Manchu*. Here, the Asian madman has ten beautiful women brought to his South American jungle lair. There, he poisons them with a snakebite and sends them around the world to kill his enemies with their now deadly kiss.

Unfortunately, Towers' script is patently ridiculous — no explanation of the girls' origins is provided, and if a more inefficient way of assassinating one's enemies has been thought up, let me know. *Blood's* one merit is Ricardo Palacios' over-the-top performance as bandit king Sancho Lopez. His character plays like a refugee from a Sam Peckinpah film.

Blue Underground's "unrated European ver-

sion" means extra blood and boobs but it's nothing worth unbuckling your trousers for. The Facts Of Dr. Fu Manchu supplement provides a concise history of the character, and

The Rise Of Fu Manchu squarely addresses the character's inherent racism. Co-star Tsai Chin, who played Fu Manchu's daughter Lin Tong, admits to wrestling with her conscience over her stereotyped character but notes that roles for Asians in the '60s were few and far between. Franco is also open about Lee's artistic pretensions, while the actor acknowledges that

he took these B-grade roles in order to provide for his wife and daughter.

## THE CASTLE OF FU MANCHU (1968) DVD

Directed by Jess Franco

Lee's last Fu Manchu film is this set's nadir. Virtually unwatchable, the poverty row *Castle of Fu Manchu* sees him attempting to destroy the world by freezing its water supply. That means







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Nayland Smith (Richard Greene) — traveling to Istanbul (actually Barcelona, Spain) to confront his arch-enemy one last time.

Lee is suitably venerable as the criminal mastermind but even his stoic presence can't save this disaster. Awkwardly staged gun battles complete with jaw-droppingly unbelievable heart transplants for sheer eudocia. I watched this film on a Sunday afternoon and could barely keep my eyes open despite having slept in. The only thing that kept my attention was the beautiful architecture of Barcelona's Antonio Gaudi-designed Parc Güell, a highlight of my last vacation.

## THE BLOODY JUDGE (1970) DVD

Directed by Jess Franco

Of these four films, *The Bloody Judge* (per-

plexingly titled *Night of the Blood Monster* in the US) provides Lee with his meatiest role. He plays Judge George Jeffreys, a real life witchfinder during England's Inquisition whose sense of justice meant dealing death to anyone facing him. Though the plot is remarkably similar to both *Mark of the Devil* and *Witchfinder General*, Lee plays Jeffreys as a righteous dilettante, someone who meres out death without having ever witnessed an execution. The character is a parallel to Lee, who expresses his distaste for graphic horror films (including his own) on this disc's *Bloody Jess* supplement.

Lee's ambivalence is justified. Producers added graphic scenes of torture and sexual degradation after filming was complete, obscuring the film's serious historical intent and condemning it to B-movie infamy. The ever diligent Blue Underground has restored the filth, much of it taken from a German print (look for the scene where Towers' wife, Maria Rohm, is violated by Jeffrey's hands — Lee refused to film the scene, necessitating a stand-in).



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# REISSUES



Horror's Holy Grail, *Halloween*, celebrates its silver anniversary.

## NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIFE

### HALLOWEEN 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Pleasence and P.J. Soles

Directed by John Carpenter

Written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill  
Anchor Bay Entertainment

It's official – Michael Myers is a quarter of a century old, which makes him as close to a real boogeyman as the North American cinematic myth-making machine ever had. And despite his evolution over those 25 years from an inscrutable wraith to a paint-and-plastic Todd McFarlane action figure, there's still a lot to be learned by going back to where it all started. And where it started was

John Carpenter's *Halloween* – a mainstream hit back in 1978 (at a budget of \$320,000, the movie raked in over \$50 million), and nothing less than a Holy Grail to horror fans worldwide.

Anchor Bay throws the party for this 25th Anniversary two-disc set by bringing together all the principals: Carpenter, co-writer/producer and then-girlfriend Debra Hill, stars Jamie Lee Curtis, P.J. Soles and Charles Cyphers, producer Irwin Yablans, money man Moustapha Akkad and the original Myers himself, Nick Castle. Everyone seems happy to talk about the movie, and little wonder – apparently the cast and crew had a blast shooting it, and the financiers made (and continue to make) a bundle of money.

Given that Anchor Bay has been reissuing

*Halloween* over the past five years with a string of extras, the new 25th Anniversary Edition doesn't offer a hell of a lot in the way of new material for the diarch. Yes, it boasts an all-new 87-minute documentary (*Halloween: A Cut Above The Rest*), but it's full of anecdotes we've heard before: how Hill's hands were used for the opening sequence; the logistics of getting the Californian Spring to look like autumn in Illinois; how William Shatner's face became the Myers mask and so on. The all-new ten minute *On Location: 25 Years Later* is a relatively throwaway doc, as are the CD-ROM components (original screenplay and two screensavers) and there's no mention of Kyle (Lindsay in the movie) Richards' untimely death earlier this year.

Collectors will also be familiar with previously released audio commentaries from Carpenter, Curtis and Hill, which pretty much leaves the film itself. At 2.35:1 widescreen, it's a spooky showcase of the late October season – autumn breeze, grinning jack-o-lanterns, colossal shadows and the deep obsidian eyes of a murderous white-masked man. Yablans comments at

some point that, back in 1978, he was surprised to find that no one in the history of film had ever used the word "Halloween" in a title; it's utterly fortuitous that the man who finally did, managed to capture the essence of it in a horror film. For that alone, *Halloween* will be forever relevant. Here's to another 25 years.

Rod Gudio

## THE PROTO-C.H.U.D. MOVIE

### RAW MEAT (1972) DVD

Starring Donald Pleasence, David Ladd and Hugh Armstrong

Directed by Gary Sherman

Written by Carl Jones and Gary Sherman  
MGM Home Entertainment

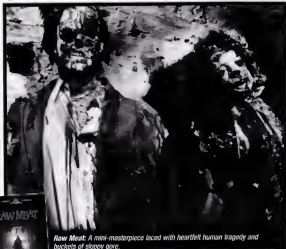
As festering a cinematic experience as its exploitative title suggests, Gary Sherman's much under-appreciated 1972 cannibal classic, *Raw Meat*, is back with skin-snacking vengeance in a gorgeous, albeit bare bones

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**Raw Meat:** A mini-masterpiece laced with heartfelt human tragedy and buckets of sloppy gore.

(get it?) widescreen DVD from horror heroes MGM.

Sherman's tale of subterranean UK terror was originally (and probably more tastefully) called *Deathline* before Sam Arkoff's AIP Pictures picked it up and gave it the nastier moniker. Whatever the Hell you wish to call it, *Raw Meat* is a challenging, deftly shot mini-masterpiece laced with heartfelt human tragedy and buckets of sloppy gore.

American wisecrass David Ladd and his cutie pie Brit gal pal Sharon Gurney literally stumble upon a half-dead hombre in a London subway tunnel. When they finally fetch the boneheaded Bobbies, the poor schmuck has vanished. Enter grand old man Donald Pleasence, in fine form as foul-tempered, foul-mouthed Inspector Calhoun, who is investigating the mysterious disappearances of a slew of unlucky tube riding tarts and subway bound blokes.

All roads lead to an 1876 cave-in that left a co-ed team of miners buried under tons of rubble. Left for dead by their indifferent employers, the miners apparently kept them-

selves alive through the ghastly act of corpse-chomping, eventually evolving into a tribe of bloodthirsty, pre-C.H.U.D. cannibals. Now, in 1972 London, the sole surviving descendant of the doomed flesh-eaters (Hugh Armstrong) has emerged from his lair seeking fresh meat, and unfortunately for Gurney, a mate. What starts off as a pedestrian, tongue-in-cheek and occasionally (thanks to the hysterically tyrannical Pleasence) hilarious British horror potboiler, swiftly evolves into something completely different.

Director Gary Sherman does a bang-up job, especially during one almost unbearably unsettling ten minute steadicam stroll through "The Man's" crumbling, sticky, death-caaked cave. The special effects by Peter and Harry Frampton are truly sickening and over the top; our feral anti-hero also has a form of bubonic plague and sports continuously oozing, painful red pustules all over his face and scalp. It's a disgusting effect that Sherman hammers home every time someone accidentally hits the seething sores and Armstrong recoils in spastic

agony. The kills are superb; shovels bisect skulls, poles impale torsos, bloody flesh is stripped from shivering bones. And the kicker is that all this glorious grue is actually supported by a great, lyrical film.

Sherman would follow this shocker a decade later with the equally brilliant *Dead and Buried* (see RM#35), and a decade after that with the utterly deplorable *Poitringer's 3*. Even if he decides to make *Bio Dome 2*, I won't give a rabid rat's ass. I'll always have the haunting, stomach-spinning *Raw Meat* and that's that.

Chris Alexander

## BASED ON A TRUE STORY

### JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER (1966) DVD

Starring John Lupton, Nerda Onyx, and Estelita Rodriguez  
Written by Carl K. Hittelman  
Directed by William Beaudine  
Elite Entertainment

Elite answers the question of what to do with a movie when no one involved is even alive to provide a commentary track with their DVD reissue of the prolific William Beaudine's *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter*. That is, get one of America's foremost drive-in film fanatics to provide colour commentary, someone who's so damn funny and knowledgeable about every little detail of the flick that it won't make a lick of difference that he had nothing to do with the actual creative process. Hell, Joe Bob Briggs (the fascist in question) probably knows more about this low-budget camp disaster than Beaudine himself.

*Jesse James Meets Frank's Daughter* is a patchwork story that clumsily knits together a scenario where the real-life outlaw of the Wild West can become entangled with the fictional Frankenstein family. Most of the film is your standard Western with Jesse James (Lupton, no relation) trying to find



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# CLASSIC HANDGUN-FU

## VERSUS: DIRECTOR'S CUT (2000) DVD

Starring Tak Sakaguchi, Hideo Sakai  
and Minoru Matsumoto  
Directed by Ryuhei Kitamura  
Written by Ryuhei Kitamura and  
Yutai Yamaguchi  
Tokyo Shock

It's de rigueur to bash North American horror films as lacking imagination or verve, especially when the most successful entry as of late was a vs. featuring two characters six films past their respective expiration dates. Offered for your consideration is a film at the forefront of a wave of dazzling horror chummed out of Asia over the last three or four years. *Versus*, while flawed, is the kind of crazy, boils-out splatterfest we haven't seen since Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive*.

Sprinting through a boreal forest *Evil Dead*-style, two escaped cons rendezvous with their gang of yakuza liberators. They pose, huff testosterone and swing their dicks before engaging in some serious handgun-fu. Fortunately for us, this is the Forest of Resurrection, the 444th of the 666 portals to "the other side." The yakuza have used it as a graveyard for years; armed zombies quickly join the bullet ballet and caps are being popped in everyone's asses. Ninety minutes of this would have been entertaining enough; a lone swordsman with an ancient score to settle enters the picture and just confuses matters. Hang on until the twist ending though, which comes about 20 minutes later than it should, and all will make sense. Sort of.

*Versus* is not about plot, its about stylish, hyper-violent eye candy. The mayhem and gore is captured by whirling, 360-degree cinematography. The acting is outstanding for a low-budget film. Sakaguchi's ability to model leather, drop deadpan lines and kick ass makes Wesley Snipe's Blade look like Stephen Urkel. Matsumoto, de facto leader of the yakuza underlings, could give Jim Carrey serious lessons on how to mug for the camera.

This is the second DVD release of *Versus*. A German company released a region-free NTSC disc that has more contrast and grain but Tokyo Shock presents a subdued and natural-looking print. Both discs preserve the original 1.85:1 aspect ratio and the single disc unrated release has four trailers for other titles in the Tokyo Shock line; the two-disc version has the extras. Whatever you do, do not buy the R version; cool kids just don't buy cut films.

Gore-Met



help for his body-building pal Hank, after he is shot in a botched carriage holdup.

Thanks to the help of one Juanita Lopez (the Cuban spitfire Estelita Rodriguez), the two are lead to the home of Baron Frankenstein, because granddaughter Maria is the only doctor in town. Unfortunately, she is also a ruthless dictator who is responsible for the deaths of countless locals courtesy of mad science, but that doesn't seem to affect Juanita's recommendation any.

The icing on this DVD is Briggs' commentary track; a ballsy move, since the guy is essentially just a critic. But Briggs ultimately steals the show – not only with an astonishing amount of detail regarding every personality involved in the film – but because he seems to know the plot inside out and proceeds to rip the whole film to pieces. It's like getting a film historian to join the cast of *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*.

Elite gives the film an enhanced transfer that holds up well, considering the age and budget of this drive-in catastrophe. A trailer is also included, but your best bet for a good time is Briggs' commentary and (more than) a few cold ones. Yee-haw!

Aaron Lupton

## DAY OF THE WORM

### SQUIRM (1976) DVD

Starring Don Scardino, Patricia Pearcy  
and R.A. Dow  
Written and directed by Jeff Lieberman  
MGM Home Entertainment

The nature run amok horror sub-genre has spawned a number of fun little diversions down the years, even though the threat of major cheese has always hung over them like a dark cloud. With lowered expectations and disbelief suspended with extreme prejudice, we were able to enjoy films like *Food of the Gods* and *Empire of the Ants* before a bunch of Poindexters at Industrial Light and Magic decided that CGI was the answer to their prayers and everything went to shit. And Jeez Louise, what an unmitigated parade of poop we've endured since then; *Octopussy*, *Bat*, *Anaconda*, *Crocodile*, *Day of the Groundhog*, *Meet the Beetles*... okay, I made up those last two, but can they really be that far off?

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Jeff Lieberman's *Screamers* still gets under the skin.

mighty *Screamers* is finally out on DVD, and a day of much rejoicing is upon us! The action in this venerable '70s cult fave by Jeff (aka *Blue Sunshine*) Lieberman takes place in an obscure Georgia backwater that suddenly

finds itself under attack by billions of killer earthworms, driven up out of the ground by downed power lines. Among the bewildered locals are the botten-throat-Georgia-asphalt-southern siren Patricia Pearcy, her nerdy New Yorker boyfriend Don Scardino and her slow-

and I'm delighted to report they're not just adequate, they actually look superb. Lieberman's commentary track revealed a particularly interesting morsel: a young and unknown Kim Basinger was originally up for the lead, a barely-known Martin Sheen was to play her boyfriend, and – the neighbour? – Sylvester frickin' Stallone! Predictably, Lieberman expresses some regret over this. "It'd be the same movie," he says, "but obviously I'd be a lot richer and look a lot smarter." Don't sweat it, Jeff – the real stars of this thing will always be the worms, and we wouldn't want it any other way.

John W. Bowen

## CANNIBAL CULTURE

### SOYLENT GREEN (1973) DVD

Starring Charlton Heston and Leigh Taylor-Young  
Directed by Richard Fleischer  
Written by Stanley R. Greenberg and Harry Harrison  
MGM Home Entertainment

FYI: *Soylent Green* is people. But you already knew that. Everybody knows that. So why is a 30-year-old film that seemingly relies on a single macabre hook still popular enough to warrant a DVD re-release with commentary, featurettes, etc? The film's continued draw is two-fold. Naturally, there's the jokey ironic iconography of box-jawed Chuck Heston running around in

polyester, screaming about conspiracies. But there's also the fact that *Soylent Green* – based on the novel by acclaimed sci-fi author Harry Harrison – is a well-rounded sci-fi yarn.

It's the year 2022, and overpopulation has caused a global shortage of just about everything but misery. Food in particular is in short supply, so the government provides nutritional "soylents", the latest being *Soylent Green*. While investigating the murder of a wealthy researcher, New York cop Robert Thorn (the Hestonator), aided by a futuristic concubine (Leigh Taylor-Young), discovers the city's been consumin' human.

Chuck gives a bang-on performance as a corrupt, cynical cop, but veteran character actor Edward G. Robinson (in his final role) is brilliant as his sidekick, Sol. Robinson conveys more about the desperate state of things by the way he cradles an apple than does the considerable detritus that infects every nook and cranny of his surroundings. The film is jammed with detail – from Thorn obsessing over rare scented soap to a graveyard of old cars converted into family homes complete with stovepipes.

Envisioning a world crippled by overpopulation, global warming and dying oceans, Harrison's story still works because it's so eerily prophetic. But really, the beautiful thing about *Soylent Green* is that if you don't wanna get bummed by its vision of impending apocalypse, all you have to do is focus on how utterly hilarious it is that a future NRA president spends an entire film wearing a cravat. Tough to swallow indeed.

Dave Alexander



witted lunkhead neighbour R.A. Dow, and let's face it, people, a massive killer worm attack without a romantic triangle subplot is like a Kennedy without a criminal record.

Oh, and then there's Jean Sullivan as our heroine's mother – I was thinking: "Wow! This ol' gal is like something out of a third-rate dinner theatre production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*." And wouldn't you know it, Lieberman's frequently amusing commentary track bears me out: "She had this Tennessee Williams thing she wanted to do and I was too young and inexperienced to tone it down." I'm, like, so vindicated!

About ten years had passed since I last watched *Screamers* on VHS, and I must admit I was fearing the worst about how the worm effects would fare under scrutiny on DVD,

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Starring Ingrid Pitt

Directed by Roy Ward Baker and Peter Sasdy

Written by Sheridan Le Fanu and Alexander Paul

MGM Midnight Movie

## SATAN WAS A NERD

### FEAR NO EVIL (1981) DVD

Starring Stefan Amgrim, Frank Bimoy  
and Kathleen Rowe McAllen

Written and directed by Frank LaLoggia  
Anchor Bay Entertainment

*Fear No Evil* is one of those flicks that's often rendered laughable by its over-sarcasticness, and yet it's that very same quality that makes it kind of charming. Andrew (Amgrim), a dorky and rather effeminate high school pariah, is secretly much more than that – he's also the Antichrist, and he's getting ready to open up a can of apocalyptic whoop-ass on an unsuspecting human race. Only three angels sent to Earth in human form can stop him, and I'll leave it to you, Gentle Reader, to witness the rest for yourself.

On the commentary track, director Frank LaLoggia asserts that he consciously chose a Satanic theme for his first feature because he wanted it to stand apart from the onslaught of inferior slasher fare that followed on the heels of *Halloween*. Commendable, sure, but his big mistake was to jump on a bandwagon that had long since snapped an axle; the Satanic horror film craze of the seventies began with *Rosemary's Baby* back in '68, peaked with *The Exorcist* in '73 and died with *The Omen* in '76, five years prior to the release of *Fear No Evil*. The high school outcast character and be-careful-who-you-pick-on undercurrent of *Carrie* were also old hat at this point. Unfortunately, LaLoggia even sees fit to throw in a traumatic locker room shower incident and two secondary characters whose resemblance to John Travolta and Nancy Allen's baddies in *Carrie* is just way too close to ignore.

Still, for all its pompous tackiness, it's hard to totally dislike *Fear No Evil*. It's a great looking film for its budget, and LaLoggia heaps some well-deserved praise upon cinematographer Frederic Goodich, who jells him on the commentary track. There's also a wonderful early punk and new wave soundtrack, especially memorable when Johnny Rotten snarls "I am an Antichrist!" while a black-clad Andrew glowers down at the schoolyard from his vantage point on a fire escape, one of those movie moments that's just way cool despite being way obvious.

Before wrapping this up, I must direct your attention to an item from the "Not That There's Anything Wrong With That" file. It was reported several years ago that the now openly gay LaLoggia revealed that *Fear No Evil* was difficult for him to watch years later because it was analogous to the inner turmoil he experienced prior to coming out of the closet. What strikes me as bizarre is that he makes no mention of this on the commentary track, even though that very inner conflict obviously makes up the picture's emotional centre. He speaks very bravely of the film's homoerotic imagery (and believe you me, there's plenty to be had), but leaves it at that, without any further explanation. He does, however, mention that he finds *Fear No Evil* much easier to watch now, ultimately pronouncing it "a mixed blessing". Draw your own conclusions.

John W. Bowen

How happy was I when my winkin', nudging editors assigned me to spill the bloody beans on this saucy dual shot of classic, somewhat literate Breit-tit Hammer mayhem. *Vampire Lovers* has always been one of my faves and I'd never seen the curiously PG-rated *Countess Dracula*. Both are classics of erotic vampire cinema, both have been resurrected by MGM for this sumptuous buck-banging DVD and both star the sumptuous slavish beauty Ingrid Pitt as a somewhat tortured, sexually aware vampire vixen.

Side A gives us Roy Ward Baker's naughty take on Sheridan LeFanu's classic story *Carmilla*. Pitt plays the doomed vampire Countess Carmilla/Mircalla Karnstein as a somewhat tragic figure, a bisexual Satanic leech who nonetheless wants nothing more than to love her noble female victims/girlfriends. And love them she does. *Carmilla*, you see, is fond of sipping not their necks, but their heaving boomer veins in some sexy, yet rather gratuitous, softcore lesbian scenes that, in 1970, ensured a hard R rating.

The action surrounding these sweaty encounters is pretty damn good too; the great Hammer standby Peter Cushing pops up as a vengeance crazed vampire hunter intent on tracking down the sapphic she-beast that deep sixed his only daughter, and director Ward Baker shoots the whole lusty affair with an eye for garish Gothic fantasy. It's no wonder that this sumptuously designed, intensely erotic film launched an entire lady licking horror sub-genre. The flick isn't perfect, however; the aforementioned lurid vamp love sequences seem vaguely "inserted" and admittedly, distract from rather than advance the plot (holy cow, what am I saying?!). And, man, would someone explain to me why Pitt turns into, not a wolf, not a bat, but a freakin' cat? Meeeeee-fuckin'-oww!

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Ingrid Pitt gets her licks in *Vampire Lovers*.

The B-side feature, Peter Sasdy's *Countess Dracula*, is a bit of a titular head-scratcher. There is no link to the toothy Transylvanian tyrant in sight. Instead we get a handsomely produced account of the real-life Hungarian Countess Elizabeth Bathory, "The Blood Countess" as she was affectionately known to the local yokels. In order to retain her youthful glow, the decadent dame would torture and murder the village virgins, bathing in their free flowing glee.

Pitt plays Bathory as a bitter, manipulative hag who after one splash of the red stuff miraculously transforms into a firewheelin' royal heartbreaker. Masquerading as her own daughter, Bathory woos the stable boy, taking the time to seduce and kill many a pure puss before, on her wedding day of course — blammo! — instant hagatha and instant incarceration. This is a good film, well mounted and acted with copious amounts of sex and sadism. It's unfortunate, however, that Hammer didn't have the

cajones to shoot this as a straight period piece instead of trying to find a way to tie it up to their Dracula franchise. Ah well, the flick still rocks on many levels and is a must for Hammer fans and Pitt stalkers. I know I'm not alone.

Chris Alexander

## THE CURSE LIVES ON

### POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE (1986) DVD

Starring JoBeth Williams and Craig T. Nelson  
Written by Michael Grais and Mark Victor  
Directed by Brian Gibson

### POLTERGEIST III (1988) DVD

Starring Tom Skerritt, Nancy Allen  
and Heather O'Rourke  
Written by Gary Sherman and Brian Taggart  
Directed by Gary Sherman  
MGM Home Entertainment

In 1982, Steven Spielberg and Tobe Hooper gave the film world one of its more memorable supernatural ghost films with *Polter-*

*geist*. It was as close to family-oriented horror as you can get, but still managed to pack in some very memorable scares and visceral shocks. Both directors originally planned to come back for a sequel, but decided to remove themselves from the title altogether after one of the original film's actresses, Dominique Dunn, was murdered by her boyfriend. Thus began the "Poltergeist curse," and the creation of two somewhat unworthy sequels.

Despite the departure of Spielberg and Hooper, *Poltergeist's* original writers stayed on for the next installment, along with stars JoBeth Williams as Mrs. Freeling, Craig T. Nelson as her husband, and Heather O'Rourke as little Carol Ann, whose angelic innocence was preyed upon by the mysterious "beast" in the original. But despite the returning faces, *Poltergeist II* lost all the effectiveness of its predecessor. The film takes place four years after the Freeplings' house was made into an orgam flying saucer by undead spirits; the family has now moved in with Mrs. Freeling's mother and are in dire straits — they're broke, and the guilt of having to live off a relative causes some serious tension. Cue the sudden death of grandma (who we learn has a psychic link with Carol Ann à la *The Shining*), as well as the arrival of a Native American shaman, and a preacher dressed in black who offers answers to the family's ills, not to mention the supernatural shenanigans of the original film for a re-hash of its plot.

Despite a few convincing effects, *Poltergeist II* falls flat as a cheesy, unengaging film. The religious parables offered by the presence of the Shaman and preacher Kane seem contrived, and too much time is spent exploring the mythology of the forces that haunted the Freeplings in the original. Viewers will get the answers they are looking for, but none of them are particularly interesting. Worst of all, the movie isn't frightening in the least. As for the curse, shortly after shooting concluded, Julian Beck (Kane) passed away due to stomach complications and a couple of years later, Will Sampson (the shaman) died from a heart attack.

Around the time of Sampson's death, the series' third installment hit theatres. With the mythology of Carol Ann and her supernatural tormentors now fully explained, director Gary (Dearhline, *Dead and Buried*) Sher-

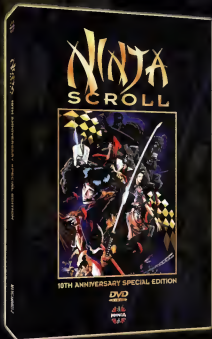


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## PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL CAMPER

### HITCHER IN THE DARK (1989) DVD

Starring Joe Bologh, Josie Bissett and Jason Scaizer

Written and directed by Umberto Lenzi

Shriek Show

In the annals of Italian cinema, Umberto Lenzi is a second-tier director, never achieving the commercial or critical success of Mario Bava, Dario Argento or Lucio Fulci. A prolific journeyman, Lenzi made nearly 70 films in a wide variety of genres and is best known for kick-starting the notorious cannibal genre with *Il paese del sesso selvaggio* (*Man from Deep River*) in 1972. He made three films in that genre, the last, *Carnibal Ferox*, remains the most popular and enduring in his filmography. Even so, Lenzi went Stateside at the end of the '80s, making three films there; the entertaining *Amityville Horror*/*Poltergeist* hybrid *Ghosthouse* in 1987, sleazy *Shocker*-rip *Nightmare Beach* the following year, and the *Henry*, *Portrait of a Serial Killer*-inspired *Hitcher in the Dark* (*Pausa nel buio*) in 1989.

In it, Mark (Bologh) is the young son of a wealthy hotel magnate who spends his summer days touring the eastern seaboard of the US, raping and murdering attractive young hitchhikers in the back of his luxurious Winnebago. Daniela (Bissett) falls into the clutches of the sullen psycho, playing into his mommy fixation in hopes of escaping her captor. Their interaction provides the bulk of the film, all of which takes place within the confines of the rolling house of torture.

*Hitcher in the Dark* is ultimately hamstrung by sanitized violence and gore, a demure performance by Bissett and a tacked-on ending that dilutes any impact the film may have had. The opening off-screen murder and subsequent body disposal is fairly disturbing, but Lenzi quickly abandons real psychotic shenanigans to concentrate on the cat-and-mouse game between victim and victimizer. An extra gory killing or two would have gone a long way towards reinforcing Mark's inner torment, but instead we get too many shots of the mommy-loving psycho brooding behind mirrored aviator sunglasses. In an accompanying interview, Lenzi interrupts the discussion to apologize for the silly and anti-climactic revenge denouement, claiming the producer wanted a somewhat happy ending.

Shriek Show presents an excellent re-mastered anamorphic print in the original 1.85:1 aspect ratio as part of their Giallo Collection, a most tenuous connection. Extras include the short interview with Lenzi and theatrical trailers for this film, Lenzi's *Black Demons* (1991) and Tonino Valerii's *My Dear Killer* (1972). Given that the giallo and poliziotteschi Lenzi made during the '70s are his most highly regarded films, this comparatively lackluster effort seems an odd choice for release. In contrast, his *Violent Projection* (*Napoli violenta*, 1978), the greatest of the Italian *Dirty Harry* rip-offs, remains begging for the same loving attention Shriek Show has paid to *Hitcher in the Dark*.

Core-Mel



man's film retreads old ground; this time, Carol Ann is living with her aunt and uncle in a high-rise constructed with hundreds of mirrors. The family dynamic remains the focus of the story; Carol Ann's biological Aunt (Allen) has a difficult time accepting her niece, and, as a result, is the weak link that allows Kane to find the little girl and bring her to "the other side" yet again.

Despite the limitations of the script, Sherman does a superb job in utilizing the mirrors as a gimmick, with characters appearing in both good and evil roles, depending on which side of the looking glass they're on. You'll be surprised at how well this trick holds up in delivering the shocks, and the numerous scenarios with the family jumping in and out of Kane's dimension is more imaginative than the first sequel.

The ultimate misfortune with which the *Poltergeist* curse ended was the untimely death of O'Rourke at the age of twelve due to intestinal blockage, just after *Poltergeist III* wrapped. As a result, the ending was rewritten to exclude her character, a somewhat confusing closure to two ambitious but sadly lackluster follow-ups to a modern classic.

Aaron Lupton



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The straight-to-vid market has recently been flooded with fact-based serial killer films: Ed Gein, John Wayne Gacy, Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy... now joined by Speck and Ramirez.

# A TALE OF TWO RITCHHARDS

by John W. Bowen

## Speck

Starring Beverly Ann Sobole and Doug Cole  
Directed by Keith Walley  
Written by Aaron Pope and Don Adams  
Shadow Entertainment

## Nightstalker

Starring Roselyn Sanchez, Bret Roberts  
and Danny Trejo  
Written and directed by Chris Fisher  
Columbia TriStar

One stormy Chicago night in July of 1966, Richard Speck terrorized a house full of student nurses, only one of whom would survive. Between 1985 and 1986, Satan-worshipping drug-addict Richard "The Night Stalker" Ramirez terrorized the city of Los Angeles, robbing, raping, torturing and murdering victims whose ages ranged from six to 83. In 2003, both

these cases would provide fodder for straight-to-video feature films, one poverty-stricken but solid, the other astoundingly shiny.

Director Keith Walley makes the best of a bad situation as Speck, utilizing his story's claustrophobic setting to full advantage as what appears

to have been a mighty tight budget. The real Richard Speck actually bore a striking resemblance to actor James Woods, who probably would have been terrific in this role, although I suspect the fee involved would have been well short of his usual figure. Regardless, Doug Cole is more than up for the gig, cooing pure evil

without chewing up an excess of scenery, and if Walley seems rather over-reliant on mood lighting and low angles, the end justifies the means — all involved have done themselves proud.

Text superimposed over the end of the film fills us in on the particulars of Speck's sad and death sentence, later commuted to life without parole. Given Walley's attention to factual detail, it's curious that no mention is made of Speck's death by natural causes in prison in 1991, nor of the infamous videotape that surfaced a few years later in which Speck, sporting an impressive set of hormonally-enhanced hooters, smoked weed in a jail cell and bragged of his exploits ("It just wasn't their night," he said of his 1966 victims) before engaging in a spirited spot of spycam with a fellow inmate.

In theory, the Ramirez case is the stuff of cinematic dynamite, a true story even the most pedestrian filmmaker should be able to mine for a decent movie, but writer/director Chris Fisher's preposterous, tacky, hyper-stylized wank job only serves to exploit-and-investigate one of the most brutal serial rape/murder sprees of the twentieth century.

Fisher follows a checklist of the most troubling music video clichés — film speed manipulation, camera gymnastics, jump cuts, machine gun edits, kaleidoscope montages — in order to bart out a film that looks like the work of a tenth-rate David Fincher huffing/cheating producer. Solid performances by Roselyn Sanchez, Bret Roberts (who admittedly bears an uncanny physical resemblance to Ramirez) and '80s-life career criminal-turned-theatrical Danny Trejo are wasted by the narcissistic Fisher (a former corporate lawyer and hence almost as evil as any serial

killer) who also commits the unpardonable sin of deviating from the facts of the case to cram in his own contrived "improvements."

So here's a bit of useless trivia: Ramirez wasn't actually brought down in a *Miami Vice*-style shootout with a drop-dead-beautiful rookie cop (Sanchez). In fact, he was chased down and beaten to a pulp by an angry mob after a botched car theft and eventually rescued by LAPD. Given the facts, this film could virtually write itself, but no, Fisher thinks he knows better. *Nightstalker* is damned — this is one filmmaker who seriously needs to get over himself. Speck 1, Ramirez 0.



speck



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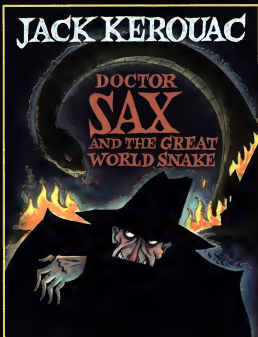
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# COHEN LIVES AGAIN!

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

**M**averick NYC writer/director Larry Cohen has been kicking around for over three decades, bringing his own inimitable quirky style to the silver screen. While not exclusively a genre filmmaker in the truest sense, Cohen's weedless low-budget thrillers have ways of taking terror trappings and twisting the shit out of them.

Witness immortal mutant baby cult classic *It's Alive* (a personal fave), with Rick Baker's fanged demon tot clawing its way into a topical tale of child welfare and parental responsibility. Or how about his irreverent goof on Stephen King's vampires in *A Return to Salem's Lot*? Or the virulent yogurt-from-Hell creeper *The Stuff*? Cohen flirts between bizzaro camp

schlock, serious minded studies in horror and gimmick-laden crime dramas (he wrote the recent Colin Farrell vehicle *Phone Booth*).

Recently, Blue Underground dug up three of Cohen's classics; an obscure gore comedy; a supernatural cop shocker; and a completely berserk dragon vs. jazzman loser opus that may or may not be the man's crown jewel. All three features come packed to the gills with extras, including commentaries by Cohen and *Maniac* mastermind (and Blue Underground guru) Bill Lustig. So sit back, relax, and take a ride into the darkest recesses of indie film oblivion...

**I** Starring Michael Moriarty, David Caradine and Richard Roundtree  
Written and directed by Larry Cohen

Where the convoluted *God Told Me To* fails, *Q* succeeds smashingly. Made in the wake of his termination as director of the Mickey Spillane adaptation *The Jury*, Cohen decided—fuck it—I'm gonna make a movie anyway, and whipped this script off in a week, securing much of the cast and crew in about the same fevered time. *Q* (a.k.a. *The Winged Serpent*) once again merges three or four flicks in one heaving cinematic mass; here we've got a serial killer thriller, a cop drama, the plight of a small time crook lookin' to score and, of course, the tie that binds them all together, old badass Quetzalcoatl himself, a 200-foot-long winged

Aztec dragon/bird deity thing, resurrected by the faithful to do some serious damage on topless NYC sunbathers.

The film sports some great (albeit ludicrous) gore, terrific acting (especially Moriarty as the funky hood), big time belly laughs, and truly

laughable stop-motion effects. Cohen's screenplay is once again razor sharp and the whole flick feels as wild, edgy and angry as the disgruntled filmmaker must have been at the time. Many consider this Cohen's best genre offering; I still prefer *It's Alive*. Either way, *Q* rocks the low-budget nest and is a MUST for those looking to make a quality flick on a go-for-broke, stack yer pennies budget.

## BONE

Starring Yaphet Kotto, Joyce Van Patten and Andrew Duggan  
Written and directed by Larry Cohen

Cross genre genre pool splice time, kids. Cohen's first gig as writer/director was also known in some circles as *Beverly Hills Nightmare*, but don't be misled; while *Bone* ain't a horror movie by any stretch of the mind, it's still a mighty fucked-up flick. Yaphet Kotto (Allen) plays a hulking black man (when I related this to a friend of mine, his sarcastic response was "Wait a minute, you trying to tell me that Yaphet Kotto plays a black man?") who crashes the stress nest of a rich Beverly Hills couple and proceeds to dismantle their already teetering relationship. First off, the angry thug demands money, then tries to rape the wife (shirly played by a frequently nude Joyce Van Patten) while hubby (Cohen regular Andrew Duggan) makes a quick and dirty bank run. Then things get

strange.

En route to the nearest financial institute, Duggan meets a wigged-out kleptomaniac (Jeanne Berlin) who accuses him of being a child molester before she bonks his middle-aged brains out. Meanwhile Kotto and Van Patten fall in love and plot to murder Duggan for his life insurance policy. Then things get REALLY strange.

*Bone* is a massively dated socio-political black comedy with heavy doses of weird violence, anti-Nam critique, sex and surrealism. With its supersonic melodramatic overacting, heavy-handed symbolism and switchblade editing, the film's closest structural cousin is the work of sleaze auteur Russ Meyer. The bits are smaller but you get the picture. A truly unique and bizarre film that set the wonky tone for Cohen's future work.

## GOD TOLD ME TO

Starring Tony Lo Bianco, Sandy Dennis, Richard Lynch  
Written and directed by Larry Cohen

One of Cohen's most notorious flicks, the still controversial *God Told Me To* (a.k.a. *Demon*) is a mixed bag at best. Cohen's strengths have always been in his writing, not his filmmaking, and this theological mind bender is the proof. *God Told Me To* tells the exceedingly ambiguous



and ultimately convoluted tale of devout and tortured Catholic NYC detective Tony Lo Bianco and his slow, unsettling realization that a slew of mass murders may be linked by the man in the sky — literally! Water tower snipers, homicidal fathers, grocery store stabbers and St. Paddy's Day assassins all have one thing in common — when prompted for the motive behind their spontaneous lunacy, they all claim that God Told Them To, hence the title — DUH!

Eventually, Lo Bianco traces the hysteria to a glowing, holier than thou extraterrestrial Antichrist (played by *Bad Dreams'* Richard Lynch), a hermaphrodite interstellar psycho born to a virginal schoolmarm 25 years prior. Complicating matters further is the notion that slightly off-killer cop Lo Bianco may himself be a brother of sorts to the alien deity. Top the whole heaving low-budget mess off with a crew of corrupt cops, a slew of killer pimps and waves of lethal religious riots and you have the most over-the-top, sprawling pseudo-intellectual sci-fi/horror epic ever to cost as much as a McDonald's Happy Meal.

## GOD TOLD ME TO KILL

KLAREN LIND

www.godtoldme.com

DUH

All the same, it's really difficult for me to wholeheartedly slam this flick; Cohen's script is truly brilliant, a real vision and one of a kind. It's just distressing to see this A-list idea drown in a hacked-up cheapo C-level production that goes in too many directions before collapsing under its own heavy duty weight. Lo Bianco looks like a shaggy version of *Sesame Street's* Bert, but is otherwise a serviceable protagonist; the late Sandy Dennis whines with conviction as the distressed ex-wife and the sexually ambiguous Lynch makes for a compelling Heaven/Hellspawn. If Roger Corman's New World pictures had only dipped a few more duckets into the picture (at the very least cleaning up the distressingly horrendous visual effects) we might've had a true multi-genre masterpiece. Perhaps the cash-strapped Cohen could have removed a couple of the half-baked subplots and supporting players and focused exclusively on Lo Bianco's character. Whatever the case, *God Told Me To* is far too interesting to dismiss and way too frustrating to fully recommend. As it is, it is what it is, you dig? An interesting, albeit much revered, failure. **B-**



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## CINEMARQUEE

## A BRIDESMAID TO THE BRIDE

## THE GHOUL (1934) DVD

MGM Home Entertainment

Before he resurrected Mary Shelley's monster two years later in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Boris Karloff got in a bit of rehearsal with *The Ghoul*, Britain's first attempt to capitalize on the growing popularity of Hollywood horror. As blasphemous Egyptologist Professor Morlant, Karloff invokes both the menace of *The Mummy's* Ardeth Bay and the staggering physicality of Frankenstein's monster. Too bad *The Ghoul* lacks the chills of either film.

Karloff plays Morlant, a "robber of the dead" determined to cheat death by offering the god Anubis the Eternal Light, an invaluable jewel bought from the absinthe-drinking Dragore (Harold Huth). He is aided in his quest by his contrary-minded but devoted servant Lang (Ernest Thesiger, with whom Karloff would co-star in *Bride*). Upon his death, Morlant is interred in his personal Egyptian-styled crypt, much to the consternation of the new pastor Hartley (Ralph Richardson), who decries Morlant's pagan ways.

What follows is a drawing room murder mystery marked by mannered but smart dialogue and sometimes sly humor (but most of the time, the gags fail). The change in tone is jarring, especially once Morlant awakes to find the Eternal Light stolen, and goes on a rampage to find it. That's when the picture

gets serious again, guns are drawn, and the villains (there are several) reveal themselves.

More of an historical curiosity than a genre classic (it was thought lost for several years), *The Ghoul* benefits from Karloff's presence but suffers from its awkward attempts to balance laughs and screams, something James Whale would do much better in *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Call this the bridesmaid to *The Bride*.

## LIKED IT BETTER WHEN IT WAS CALLED THEM!

## IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA (1955) DVD

Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment

Maybe it's just me, but the nostalgic halo worn by many of the beloved post-war creature features grows increasingly tarnished as each title makes its way to DVD. Those vague but warm memories of monster movies digested during childhood are being chilled by the realization that most of them just weren't very good.

Take *It Came From Beneath the Sea*. It's rightly lauded for animator Ray Harryhausen's work; the image of his giant octopus taking down the Golden Gate Bridge remains impressive and surely terrified kids back in '55. Too bad little outside of Harryhausen's special effects remains special.

Kenneth Tobey (*The Thing From Another World*) is Captain Pete Mathews, a smug submarine captain whose faith in technology is shaken by an encounter with the titular cephalopod. It seems the deep-sea beastie's food supply has been contaminated by local H-bomb testing so it's gone in search of fresher food... like fishing boat personnel (destroyed in a very *Gojira*-like moment). This leads to scientists and soldiers looking for a way to destroy the thing before it further



*The Ghoul*: More of an historical curiosity than a classic.

embarrasses the military... I mean, takes innocent lives.

Screenwriter George Worthing Yates seems to be riffing (ripping?) off his original story for the far superior giant ant flick *Them!*, released a year earlier in '54. Instead of radiation from the first A-bomb, it's the mighty H-bomb that awakens the beast; San Francisco is substituted for L.A.; and *Them!*'s Joan Weldon is replaced by Faith Domergue (*This Island Earth*) as the spunky female scientist attracted to the authority figure in charge (James Arness in *Them!*, Kenneth Tobey here).

Kudos to Columbia for the widescreen presentation and cleaned-up print. Clever empor: the disc's main extras, The Harryhausen Chronicles and This Is Dynamation features, are the same as those on Columbia's recent *20 Million Miles To Earth* disc.

Sean Plummer



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# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

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IN THIS ISSUE!

THE SANDMAN: ENDLESS NIGHTS

by Neil Gaiman and Various Artists

DC/Vertigo

THE AUTHORITY: ABSOLUTE VOL.2

by Mark Millar and Various Artists

DC/Vertigo

THE DARK HORSE BOOK OF HAUNTINGS

Various Writers/Artists

Dark Horse

DRAWING ON YOUR NIGHTMARES

Various Writers/Artists

Dark Horse



spotlighting the seven members of the Endless family, each one rendered by a different artist (six of whom had never previously worked with writer Neil Gaiman on *The Sandman*). Gaiman's conversationally poetic voice is as nimble and deft as ever, but the impact of the oversized format varies according to creative partner. Really, though, there's nothing here that's screaming for this kind of lavish treatment (that being said, Barron Storey's Fifteen Portraits Of Despair would probably be unreadable if it was any smaller). And aside from the obvious family theme, the lack of an underlying plot thread to tie these stories together impedes this project from being anything more than a reunion when it should have been a party.

**Go big or go home?** If you're a member of the ass-kicking Authority, living on a sci-fi aircraft carrier five miles long, you can do both. Essentially the JLA if they took justice

into their own hands, *The Authority* was a larger than life series from the get-go, when writer Warren Ellis and penciller Bryan Hitch launched it four years ago. Under Ellis' maniacal direction, the arbitrarily moral superteam nuked a fascist (and his country), committed the full-scale genocide of an alternate earth and, for a finale, killed god (yes, that god). This was the book for which the term "widescreen comics" was coined, and rightly so. Already collected in four standard-size TPBs, DC's two Absolute editions of *The Authority* must be seen to be believed. Clocking in at a beyond-spectacular 8.5" X 12.75", each book anthologizes twelve action-packed issues. The recently released Vol. 2 features the seamless transition to second scribe Mark Millar, who topped Ellis' execution of god with the unprecedented war waged by the Earth against humanity itself. Bottom line: *Absolute Authority* kicks ass absolutely. (Note: Alan Moore's *League of Extraordi-*

**A**s the saying goes, size matters. And in terms of the matter of size, the comic book medium has traditionally been single-minded, to the degree of clocking in consistently at roughly 6.5 inches wide by 10.25 inches tall. But look no farther than four recently released anthologies for horrific visions on spectacularly different scales...

**Speak of the devil.** *Sandman* fans fainted en masse earlier this year at the news that the irreplaceable Neil Gaiman had agreed to helm a one-off collection featuring the dysfunctional family at the heart of his much-beloved, seven years concluded series. The marginally oversized *Endless Nights* (7.5" X 11.25") is executed around an interesting enough idea; it's a collection of short stories



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nary Gentlemen Vol.1 is also available in Absolute format.)

The marginally undersized *Dark Horse Book of Hauntings* (6.25" X 9.25") firmly puts the emphasis on the "things" aspect of "good things come in small packages." Make no mistake, this thing won't suffer for its reduced scale; in fact, the compact size works in its favour, making the reader all-the-more unsuspecting of the fact that he's holding a powerful little tome. An all-original anthology (to be fair, there is one literary adaptation, though it, like its companions, sees first print here), this truly unique book contains eight stories with radically varying styles that share one common trait: distressed domiciles. And to up the uniqueness ante, there's a ninth entry that is non-fictional; an interview with a séance medium. My personal highlight was *Gone* (written by Dark Horse publisher Mike Richardson and illustrated by the legendary P. Craig Russell), which is a "dare you to go into that derelict mansion" story that manages to chill despite occurring in broad daylight. And who said you have to be human to be haunted? I guarantee that you will both grin and shed a tear upon reading the refreshingly inventive *Stray*, featuring an all-canine cast of characters – well, almost all-canine, there's a cat, too – who team up to solve the mystery of, yes, a haunted dog house (*Strays* was written by Evan Dorkin and illustrated by Jill Thompson of *Sandman* fame).

And now for something completely normal. Named after Dark Horse's current horror campaign, the three-story anthology



*The Dark Horse Book of Hauntings: A collection of distressed domiciles.*



*Drawing On Your Nightmares* is a strong idea with an unfortunately average execution. First off – and this is not a strike against – the comic's standard size (6.5" X 10.25"), but this is one of those cases

where the status quo is fine, because the art feels right as-is. Not too spectacular, not too mundane, but just right. The anthology's goal is to attract new readers by showcasing characters from current Dark Horse series (Cal McDonald, *The Goon* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for this edition). Basically,

these are samplers, and the hitch here is that every story, without exception, is too short for its own good; they're basically relegated to eight pages per, and tend to conclude inappropriately quickly. Nonetheless, like everything Dark Horse's horror line has done this year, *Drawing On Your Nightmares* is certainly worth watching. **B**



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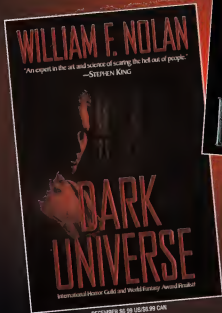
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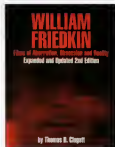
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## BOOKS

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**william friedkin:**  
films of aberration,  
obsession and reality  
Thomas D. Clagett  
Silman-James Press

"I'd rather work with tree stumps than actors." That's a direct quote from William Friedkin, and a pretty telling one. Thomas Clagett's lengthy appraisal of Friedkin's rollercoaster career in film certainly answers a host of questions, but it also confirms much of what I've always suspected: he's opinionated, tactless, boorish and hot-tempered — qualities often mirrored in his confrontational and uncompromising films. He routinely bullies actors and brutalizes film crews to get the results he craves, and at the end of the day he retily doesn't seem to care if everyone thinks he's an asshole. He's also very honest about his own not-so-endearing qualities, and that's one reason I find him so admirable.

There's a tendency, when reading a filmmaker bio, to skip ahead to the chapters about your favorite films, and I'm no better than anyone else. Ergo, I immediately flipped forward to *The Exorcist* (reader immediately keels over in shock). Then I backtracked to *The French Connection*, then went even further back to *The Boys In The Band*, then forward to *Soyuzdetfilm*, then twenty odd years forward to *The Exorcist: The Version You've*



**john carpenter:**  
the prince of darkness  
Gilles Boulenger  
Silman-James Press

*Never Seen*. Then I started over again at the beginning (as befits a responsible journalist), but the good news is that by that time I was already more than sufficiently impressed.

Clagett's understanding of Friedkin's films — both individually and as a body of work — is sound enough that I'd rank this book among the best filmmaker bios in recent memory. The balance that's so essential to a book of this kind is also in ample supply here, and while Clagett is obviously a huge fan he's also brutally honest about the fact that Friedkin's career has basically been in a long, slow downward spiral since his early seventies triumphs with *The French Connection* and *The Exorcist*, only sporadically broken up by shining moments like *To Live and Die in L.A.* and his 1997 made-for-cable version of *Twelve Angry Men*.

Both the author and Friedkin himself admit that name recognition is the main reason he gets steady work today ("They've hired me to say 'action' and 'cut'"), and yet it's impossible to deny his tremendous talent. In his introduction, Clagett asserts that "Friedkin's latest work is simply that, and therefore any study of his career and films remains incomplete." In other words, as long as he's still alive, his greatest work yet may be just around the corner. And that's why we should all keep our fingers crossed.

John W. Bowen



**john carpenter:**  
the prince of darkness  
Gilles Boulenger  
Silman-James Press

About a million issues ago, *Rue Morgue* wrote a largely negative review of John Kenneth Muir's book *The Films of John Carpenter*. We maintained (quite rightly) that a serious critique of Carpenter's work was long overdue and dismissed the book in question as a sadly missed opportunity, well-intentioned but shallow (Muir would fare much better with a subsequent tome on Tobe Hooper, which I reviewed in *RM#37*). Conversely, the real charm of French film journalist Gilles Boulenger's new book is that it consists almost entirely of interviews with Carpenter himself, thus eliminating the constant second-guessing and conjecture inherent in even the best outsider critique.

Boulenger — author of previous books on *Apocalypse Now* and the films of Tim Burton — begins by interviewing Carpenter about his childhood and teens, and then walks us through his long and intermittently stormy career, film by film. Interviews cover everything from basic themes of the films to technical points of interest, with plenty of interesting anecdotes, humorous and otherwise. All the films are given more or less equal time, which may or may not be a good thing

# The Grim Reader

**Freddy Vs. Jason**

Stephen Hand  
BL Publishing

Freddy Vs. Jason has come and gone... let the merchandising legal! Game designer Stephen Hand tries the impossible -- a literary adaptation of the summer's high profile splat-ter fest. Includes lots of profanity and references (not included in the film) to previous instruments in both Freddy and Jason's respective franchises. What's to say? Strictly for the collectors.



Aaron Lupton

## The 100 Best Movies You've Never Seen

Richard Crouse  
ECW Press

While not exclusively horror, Richard Crouse's exhaustive list of movies you've never seen (but should) is more of a laundry list of underrated personal faves, but the *Rief To Real* host wins points for including genre classics like *Carnival of Souls*, *Ernst the Pookles*, *Suspense* and *White Zombie*. It's also peppered with hilarious lists like *Favourite Titles With Ten Words Or More*, *Favourite Alan Smithee Films*, and *Favourite Legal Disclaimers*. Recommended.



Jen Vuckovic

## The Darker Passions of Dracula

Nancy Kipatrick writing  
as **Amarantha Knight**  
Circle Press Inc.

Kipatrick has been twisting the classics into S&M tales for some time now. In this lascivious re-telling, Jonathan and Mina Harker are educated in the ways of bondage and submission, and Dr. Van Helsing is pitted against Dracula himself in an all-out sensual master vs. master struggle for the possession of Lucy. Erotic fiction is an acquired taste; if it's yours, there's a lot to taste in this recent reprinting.

Monica S. Kuebler



## The Vampire Watcher's Handbook

Constance Gregory  
St. Martin's Press

Imagine vampires were real and you stumbled upon a personalized journal ripe with margin notes and sketches pertaining to a lifelong collection of data on how to seek out, identify and destroy bloodsuckers, and you'll know exactly what *The Vampire Watcher's Handbook* is all about. It's a necessary bloodstained guidebook for those who have chosen a career path extinguishing those hemoglobin hogs -- I smell a stocking stuffer!

Jen Vuckovic



*The Prince of Darkness: A balanced, honest and thoughtful filmography.*

depending on one's point of view, since it means that *Starman* and *Memoirs of An Inverible Man* get roughly the same amount of ink as *Halloween* and *The Thing*. There's also a thoughtful and heartfelt foreword by filmmaker Tommy Lee Wallace, a childhood friend of Carpenter's who would eventually collaborate with him on a number of projects.

Another well-known American horror film director who's known Carpenter for years (and who shall remain nameless) once described him to me as "a genuinely nice guy, very wealthy and very, very bitter." That's not hard to believe, given Carpenter's off-shoddy treatment by Hollywood power brokers, and he speaks quite candidly in these interviews about his numerous career lows, yet never comes off as whiny or spiteful. He's also surprisingly straightforward about his strained relationships with past collaborators like cinematographer Dean Cundey, *Halloween 2* director Rick Rosenthal (Carpenter calls Rosenthal's film "pedestrian and predictable") and writer/director Dan O'Bannon (*Alien*, *Return of the Living Dead*), to whom he refers as "a master thief -- if you have an idea he'll steal it, use it and never credit you" (he then tempers this accusation by pronouncing O'Bannon "a very talented guy").

Curiously, while *Halloween* producer and co-writer Debra Hill receives plenty

of coverage, no mention is made of the fact that she and Carpenter were once an item and how, after ending their relationship, they continued to work together on *The Fog*, starring Carpenter's new squeeze Adrienne Barbeau. I mean, holy crap, how awkward was that?

Balanced, honest and thoughtful, Boulenger's book easily ranks among the best filmmaker bios I've ever read, and believe me, I must have carried about two hundred pounds of them out the front door of *Rue Morgue's* plush Toronto offices over the last five years. Besides offering up so much insight into one of horror's greatest craftsmen, it also delivers reassurance that, despite a number of crushing disappointments and his longstanding disillusionment with the Hollywood system, John Carpenter remains truly, madly, deeply in love with film.

John W. Bowen

## hollywood's stephen king

Tony Magistrale  
St. Martin's Press

What's the old saying? Never bring a knife to a gun fight? Likewise, it's unwise to unleash lit profs on films. In both instances, someone is liable to get hurt. That said, Tony Magistrale, a professor of English at the University of Vermont, manages to survive Hollywood's



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Stephen King, an academic overview of films based on King's work, with his dignity mostly intact.

I'll admit I didn't pick up this book with high expectations. Yes, Stephen King has sold more books than God and, yes, there are 79 movie and TV adaptations of his work listed on the IMDb, but there is a reason why "Stephen King movies suck" has become a maxim. It's mostly true! For every *Stand By Me*, there are fourteen *Children of the Corn* sequels. The man's work reads like a movie, sure, but capturing that magic on screen has defeated the likes of John Carpenter (*Christine*) and Lawrence Kasdan (*Dreamcatcher*).

Put aside that qualm and there's still the fact that a film is the collaborative effort of hundreds of people, from the director to the screenwriter to the actors down to the catering guy; books are the work of a writer and maybe his editor. Magistrate acknowledges this but reasons that King is the common denominator and his worldview remains largely intact... except in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (King's notorious hate-on for that film is explored thoroughly).

But the question remains: who is this book written for? Magistrate's literary approach to films makes for some interesting observations (e.g. Kubrick's use of mirrors in *The Shining*). But, as he admits, book critics have always – and probably will always – give King short shrift, his recent National Book Award for lifetime achievement notwithstanding. Likewise, film critics praise good King-based movies like *The Shawshank Redemption* without playing up the King association. And are there really any Stephen King movie fans? Don't be silly.

So who are we left with? The author's millions of fans. Fine, but even assuming that the stereotype of them as "literary slobs" is false, are they likely to care about misogynist subtexts in *The Mangler* or paternal stereotypes in *Apt Pupil*? Not Which leaves Magistrate, his family, and yours truly. Like most Stephen King film adaptations, maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all.

Sean Plummer

## ultra violent movies

Laurent Bouzereau  
Cibadel Press

Feeling lucky, punk? Laurent Bouzereau's book offers a level-headed and superbly researched examination of violence on film and, more importantly, our oft-irrational reactions to it. He's well qualified for the gig, although he has two previous books on film to his credit, he's best known as the director of numerous featurettes for DVD editions of films as diverse as *Carrie*, *Hannibal*, *Jurassic Park* and *The Last Picture Show*.

Along with his own observations, he has included hundreds of illuminating quotes from the filmmakers and stars themselves as well as our favourite real-life villains, the censors, his exclusive interviews with Clive Barker, Oliver Stone and effects guru Greg Nicotero. Equally plentiful are hysterical and reactionary comments from mainstream film reviewers including the late Pauline Kael, who's my pick for the most overrated film critic in the history of print journalism. Naturally, the modern horror film looms large in this book, but I must admit that chapters devoted to *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Dirty Harry*, *Straw Dogs* and *Taxi Driver* actually struck me as more relevant to the subject at hand.

I can only fault Bouzereau on two counts, the first being that he gives little attention to virtually all films that predate *Psycho*. The early American gangster films of the '30s and '40s have elsewhere



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## kissing carrion

Gemma Files

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**Skeleton Brich. Mouthful of Pins.** *Kissing Carrion*. The table of contents alone reads like an invitation to an orgy for the damned. Gemma Files' raw-red stories of visceral horror have been circulating for years in various anthologies, e-zines, and chapbooks, but only now have they finally been published as her very own collection. And it turned out to be a collection worth waiting for, a sticky feast of the "un-slive".

Although the stories are mostly rooted in such yummy themes as love, sex and death, there's very little titillation to be found here. In Files' (other)world, love hurts, sex is dangerous, and death comes quickly and violently. But to label Files' work as "erotic horror" would be off-the-mark. Instead, she manages to strip that mostly-cosmetic genre down to the bone, literally, and present the reader with the open wound. If you're looking for glossed-up dirty thrills, look elsewhere.

What's ultimately so satisfying about these stories is that they hang slightly off and to the left of the genre. Like Patrick McGrath, Files is not afraid to treat horror and the macabre as high art. Her language is unashamedly playful and ambitious – more reminiscent of Rushdie than Barker. "My whole body nothing but a thin skin out, stretched tight over an endless scream." Or my favourite, halfway down the first page, "A feline eye, still struggling to close." That sort of beautiful imagery dresses every page, and how intoxicating it is. Most importantly, behind the blood and there are buckets of the stuff and gone is (plainly) in-a-story centered around rich and interesting characters. In fact, by the time we reach the (always haunting) end, we're left feeling more longing than horror.

For those of you who have been following Files' work, you'll be disappointed to find only one new piece in the collection – the title cut, *Kissing Carrion*. The good news is that it's arguably her best and most imaginative story to date (if I said it was told from the point of view of a dead body strung-up like a marionette in order to have sex for a paying audience I simply wouldn't be doing it any justice). The bad news is that, by comparison, a few of the earlier stories sometimes feel... early. Regardless, within Carrion's pages can be found some box-fresh classics including the neo-Nazi mindfuck, *Bear Shirt*, and *Holebound* (adapted for an episode of *The Hunger*). There's even a short screenplay. What is glaringly missing is the International Horror Guild award-winner, *The Emperor's Old Bones*, which will appear this Spring in her second collection, *The Worm in Every Heart*. Yum, yum – can't wait.

David Dupont

been acknowledged as hugely influential on latter-day filmmakers like Peckinpah and Scorsese and were, in hindsight, much more violent than any of the classic horror films of the same period. My other gripe is that Bouzeres devotes all his energy to good films and barely acknowledges that for every *Pulp Fiction* or *A Clockwork Orange* there are hundreds of genuinely shitty movies that simply exploit violence without doing anything even remotely interesting with it.

Regardless, it's testament to the author's talents that I found his book so enjoyable even though his opinions aren't always consistent with my own. It's my belief, for instance, that violence in entertainment and the arts is a symptom – and not a cause – of the all-too-real violence we have to live with, and is therefore a completely valid, honourable and honest expression. Bouzeres is somewhat less convinced that violent movies are generally harmless, but remains adamant about their basic validity. "While we all wish for a world without killing and violence," he states in his foreword, "I am not so sure I would want to live in a culture that had no room for *A Clockwork Orange*, *Banana and Chyde*, *The Godfather*, *Scarface* or *Taxi Driver*." Amen, brother Bouzeres.

John W. Bowen

## slasher films

Kent Byron Armstrong

McFarland & Co.

I've reviewed some books of dubious quality for *Rue Morgue*, but Kent Byron Armstrong's *Slasher Films* is the first one to leave me utterly astounded that it was ever even published. Being a writer myself, it actually pains me to totally dump on another writer's work, and because of that I'll readily admit that I tend to go easier on bad books than I do on bad movies, but goddammit, I have my limits.

*Slasher Films* kicks off with an item-by-item examination of the genre's conventions and iconography. Armstrong's prose is pedestrian, pedantic and frequently awkward, but at least this opening section is evidence that he has a good grasp of slasher fundamentals like novelty weapons, promiscuous victims and confined settings. It's the next 300-odd pages, however, that left me in a kind of outraged stupor. Why?

Well, 'cause each film (and there are several hundred featured alphabetically here) is allotted an average of a page and a half of plodding synopsis (including spoilers) followed by about 75 words of deep, scholarly analysis: "*Blood Hook* is a very enjoyable film..." "*Slumber Party Massacre* is a moderately good slasher..." "*New Year's Evil* is a fairly uneventful slasher full of mediocre acting..." Need I go on? No, didn't think so.

As much as I'd like to find something positive to say about this book, the only practical use I can think of for it is as a reference guide, and even then some curious omissions render it less than ideal. *Rituals*, for instance, is nowhere to be found here, a grievous injustice that has me seething and will no doubt leave our Gore-Met in need of heavy sedation. Oh, wait, I just thought of one more possible use for *Slasher Films*: it'd make a novel weapon of choice for a slasher film in which the killer runs amok bludgeoning his victims to death with a hardcover book about slasher films. Send my royalty cheques to *Rue Morgue*.

John W. Bowen



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# GAMERA

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Slip into a bloody bed this winter with Canadian literary gore-master Michael Slade's newest offering, *Bed of Nails*.

# MASTER OF THE NORTHERN GIALLO

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

There are more than a few reasons to take the stand and scream the glories of Vancouver's own literary demon Michael Slade. Slade (pseudonym of West Coast Criminal lawyer Jay Clarke and recently corrupted daughter Rebecca) has been pumping out elaborately structured, ultra-violent "Canadian giallos" for over 20 years and has not only developed a slobbering cult following (including Godpappy goth rocker Alice Cooper) but respectable critical notices as well. Of course, as all fellow Studebakers will tell you, the man deserves every accolade thrown at him and then some — there just isn't a precedent for the barbaric brilliance of a Slade novel.

I myself got hooked on the mad scribbles of Michael Slade when, by chance, I was given a well worn copy of the man's second excursion into psycho-sexual shock, *Ghoul* (co-written by Clarke's wife, Lee). Fusing heavy metal, homosexual uni-bombers, flesh-eating incestuous thrill killers and Lovecraftian dementia onto the framework of a standard cop thriller mystery, *Ghoul* kicked my Canadian bacon from here to Halifax. With his well researched, candid ventures into not only the most deranged of sick psyches, but the internal workings of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well, a Slade joint is somewhat disorienting — a wiggled-out witches brew of intense intellectualism, police procedural, and bare bones, white knuckle, wince-inducing gore.

"Slade is really a child of the fifties," says Clarke, the original fiend behind the facade. "In many ways it's a throwback to the men's pulp magazines, where a soldier of fortune could venture into unknown lands and get his head shrunken down to the size of an orange by a tribe of cannibals."



And indeed it's this blend of the old-fashioned and the unflinching that give Slade's work its spine. The author's current offering, the Lovecraft-faced, paeon to South Seas cannibalism, *Bed of Nails*, isn't the man's sickest or slickest offering (those honours go to the ultra-grotesome *Death's Door* and the aforementioned serpentine masterpiece *Ghoul*), but it is still a bloody good yarn well told.

Following the continuing, ever painful misadventures of tough guy Mountie Zinc Chandler as he yet again belly flops into the darkest corners of sexual depravity, *Bed of Nails* sports some inspiringly twisted set pieces right off the bat with the seedy hotel room murder of a coked-up LA producer: the poor slob is pumped full of Viagra, savagely sodomized and gets his Hollywood head spiked full of brain piercing nails. Those with soft stomachs are wise to steer clear.

"I don't like my horror gaggle and jiggle," deadpans Clarke. "I'm trying to recapture that feeling when I was young, the same feeling I had riding the old Conny Island style roller coasters or reading *I Am Legend* and *Tales From the Crypt*, or the first time I saw Hammer's *Dracula* with that full colour blood on the screen. I'm trying to bring back the dread that I experienced in that golden age."

For the record, much-abused protagonist Chandler, like most in the Slade universe, gets his share of sick kicks this time as well. In fact, all bets are off in a Slade book; anyone can deep six at any time.

"When you go to a James Bond movie, you never get to the edge of your seat," explains the author, "because you know that Bond is coming back in part 24 or whatever.

In our stories, everybody's life and sanity is up for grabs. We take our cues from films like *Psycho* and *Alien*. The climax — the horror — happens right at the beginning of those movies, and then everything that follows drives the audience, or in this case reader, nuts. It's a set-up."

Like many Slade adventures, *Bed of Nails* seamlessly blends intensely researched historical fact and present day drama, with a good chunk of the story and action set amidst Seattle's World Horror Convention. Speaking of story, *Bed of Nails* also functions as a sequel to Slade's *Apper*, with that novel's homicidal mental defect orchestrating elaborate occult influenced



Father-daughter duo churn out a psycho-sexual gore-fest under pen name Michael Slade

vengeance on arch-nemesis Chandler from the confines of his padded cell, à la Hannibal Lecter. Occasionally, the novel stops dead in its tracks, especially during the somewhat long-winded soliloquies from the slew of far too vocal red herrings, but redeems itself in high style with gobs of truly astonishing splatter and plenty of quirky Sladeisms.

"It's like a secret society," Clarke says. "These twists, these obscure references to horror culture are the secret handshake."

In typical "Slade of hand," you're never quite sure who the killer is in *Bed of Nails* until the "final rest" when all the sickening stops are pulled out. These constant shiftings of the often multiple psychotic villains' perspectives is the chief reason why Slade's work has never made it to the big screen, although, as we speak, Hollywood has optioned the rights to the first Slade adventure, *Headhunter*. However, it would take a

cinema visionary to properly pull it off.

"When we [Clarke and original members John Banks and Richard Cowell] were writing *Headhunter* in the early '80s," Clark explains, "I was wondering who would be able to translate this to film and the only one I could think of was Brian DePalma."

Essentially, reading one of Michael Slade's charmingly vicious tales is akin to watching an antiquated Sgt. Renfrew of the Royal Mounted movie serial jacked up with brains, twisted sex, highly stylized comic book violence and buckets of sloppy gore. His underrated, distinctly Northern novels are yet another reason (along with the periodical you're holding in your hot little hands), that make me PROUD to be a red-blooded, occasionally deep thinking and somewhat perverted Canadian man. ☿



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DINNER'S READY!

# THE GORE MET

**Sinema Diable and Eclectic DVD have released an exciting line of Euro-trash classics on DVD. Once again, horror fans get mugged.**

In the wake of both the book and film version of William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* a sequel-load of demonic possession films came out of Europe, most notably from Italy. With the exception of Alberto De Martino's *The Antichrist* (L'anticristo, 1974) and *House of Exorcism* (La casa dell'esorcismo, 1973), Alfredo Leone's retelling of Mario Bava's *Lisa and the Devil* (Lisa e il diavolo, 1976), this sub-genre has been overlooked in the current tidal wave of DVD reissues. Given those facts, the release on DVD of Mario Gariazzo's *L'ossessa* (re-titled *The Bone Midnight Horror Show*, 1974) for North American audiences should be a significant upgrade to the shabby treatment it received on VHS, right?

Wrong! Although I was initially excited to receive a package of DVDs from this brand new label for review, my enthusiasm was tempered when I saw the lacklustre, uninformative packaging typical of public domain DVDs. Then when I popped the first one into my player, this column went from being a review to a consumer warning – this was the same fuzzy pan-and-scan videotape with the same widescreen credit sequence and clumsily inserted title card now preserved on DVD! Following are the sad facts:

## THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE

Emilio Mariglia's *The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave* (La notte che Evelyn uscì dalla tomba, 1971) is a psychological thriller-cum-murder mystery sleazefest that has its roots in the giallo sub-genre. Eclectic Video state on their website that "Finally, A LETTER-BOXED Edition of The Euro-Trash Horror Classic in all it's [sic] UNCUT Glory" (their capitalization and misspelling, not mine). Whoever authored this DVD should consider a new line of

work. The disc is presented at 1.66:1 instead of the 2.35:1 aspect ratio it was filmed in, resulting in credits being lopped off and actors stretched beyond normal human proportions. More distracting than the copious print damage, missing frames and murky transfer, is the colour bleed into the letterboxed portions of the screen. Also, the claim that this print is "uncut" at 99 minutes is dubious; it is generally acknowledged that the complete print runs 103 minutes.

## SNAKE PEOPLE

Boris Karloff may have been the singular face of horror, but despite considerable talent and screen presence, he never resonated with mainstream audiences and spent the latter part of his career appearing in low-budget horror films. At the end of his life, Karloff was reduced to appearing in a series of four cheap Mexican horror films. One of those, *Isle of the Snake People*, has long been a staple of the public domain market as *The Snake People*. Ales, in death, as in life, Karloff can get no respect. Sinema Diable has pressed another weary video master onto a poorly authored DVD and believe it, folks, there is no truth, there is no justice.

## THE VAMPIRES NIGHT ORGY

Spanish horror films of the '70s are finally getting their just due on DVD, but pickings are slim. A release of Leon Klimovsky's *The Vampires Night Orgy* should be cause for celebration. Sinema Diable, perhaps fearing the ghost of Generalissimo Franco, has released the "clothed" version, one made to keep fascist censors happy. Whether or not Sinema Diable is to blame for this isn't clear,

because by all accounts they merely copied the DVD released by UK outfit Pagan Films. Perhaps this is why this is the best looking of the lot, even though a dingy, damaged print was used to make the original disc.

## POST CRYPT

It was reported on numerous websites last summer that Glenn Danzig is behind the Sinema Diable imprint though the rumour has yet to be substantiated. "Basically, these are Glenn's favourite horror movies," Eclectic Video president Clint Weiler said last year, "so we're releasing them on disc through Eclectic." There is no mention of Sinema Diable on Danzig's official website and his name does not appear on the DVDs or in the press releases Eclectic included with the discs. This would mean that Danzig could be shamelessly hiding behind the public domain loophole to release crappy bootleg DVDs – fuzzy logic for a man who has often mentioned being "ripped off" by "idiot assholes" in interviews. If all of this is true, I suggest Danzig break out a dictionary and acquaint himself with the meaning of hypocrisy, because these DVDs are exactly that. **Z**





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# AUDIO DROME

REVIEWS BY TOM DRAGOMIR, ROD GUDINO, AARON LUFTON, AND JEN VUCKOVIC



## JEEPERS CREEPERS 2 Classical

**Bennett Salvay**  
*Various*

It didn't take long for The Creeper to climb the ranks to become a genre icon and one of the hottest horror franchises around. The downswing is that the boogeylord's best moment is behind him and his current incarnation — attacking a bus of cheerleaders and jocks no less — is already yesterday's mashed potatoes. Composer Bennett Salvay plays it by the numbers, tailoring his score to every scene, nuance and jolt from the screen, which means that his score must have pleased a lot of executives and is ultimately forgettable. Put this on and watch the movie all over again in your head. **RG** \*\*\*

David Bowie, John Frusciante, Skinny Puppy and The Damning Well, among others. The material is alternately hard and sublime and tends towards the latter on Puscifer's Rev 22.20, Mila's Rocket Collecting and Johnette Napolitano's Suicide Note. The vision is here, definitely. Sink into it and think about the movie it could have been. **RG** \*\*\*\*



## VAN HELSING'S CURSE Rock Opera

**Oculus Infernum**  
*Kook Records*

Ex-Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider has a hard-on for horror; he wrote and starred in *Strangeland* a few years back and now returns with Van Helsing's Curse, a ghost story concept album that riffs off classic Halloween music the likes of Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*, Jerry Goldsmith's *Omen* score, Grieg's *In The Hall Of The Mountain*

King, Chopin's Funeral March and Mussorgsky's *Night On Bald Mountain*. Snider takes the role of narrator in this sweeping opera of electric guitar, string ensemble and layered vocals that tells the largely clichéd story of a fight between good and evil. Classical music puns will undoubtedly blanch at the thought of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata raged up with a drum beat, but those of you with a penchant for Trans-Siberian Orchestra-styled rock operas will find plenty of Halloween fire here to keep your jack 'o' lanterns glowing. **RG** \*\*



## CABIN FEVER

**Nathan Barr and Angele Badalamenti**  
*La-La-Lux Records*

Gore-score newcomer Nathan Barr teams with David Lynch protégé Angele Badalamenti to give *Cabin Fever* some pretty sharp teeth

where it counts. Barr uses a variety of instruments (no samplers or programming) to create that helpless and hunted feel of the early '80s slasher. Deep and slow cello movements gather momentum on the background sequences before Barr ups the anxiety with quick cello hits and knifing feedback. A good example is *Burn The Hermit*, a creepy hair-raising orchestration that charges up with rhythmic bongo drums before exploding into a fury of saw-toothed violins. For his part, Badalamenti is credited alongside Barr twice and provides three bonus tracks along with a mysterious jazzy number (*Deputy Wilson*) that was likely recycled from one of those weird *Jean Peck* backwards-talking midget dream-sequences. The disc also includes a snappy bluegrass tune, a crappy metal track, a flower-pop love-in by the Turtlenecks and a few choice sound-clips from the flick. Too bad a full-length version of David Hess' *Wait For The Rain* didn't make it but that's a minor quibble. **TD** \*\*\*\* 1/2



## UNDERWORLD

**Various**

*Lakeshore Records*

We didn't care much for *Underworld* around here — too much style, not enough substance. Mind you, what fails on celluloid isn't necessarily a bad thing when it comes to the music, given that a lot of modern music is style over substance anyway. *Underworld* collects a number of former and past darklings under its not-so-Gothic archways, the likes of Puscifer,

Goth/Industrial

## SPOOKY SOUNDS FOR SPOOKY PLACES

### DARK ASYLUM

**The Terror Cycle**

*Acme Creations*

A dark and stormy forty minutes of fear, the idea behind *Dark Asylum* isn't too far removed from those "Spooky Sounds for Halloween" CDs that crop up at your local drugstore each October, and of the hundreds that come through *RM* every year, this is the only one that hit the Halloween mark. Brainchild Michael Pallante forges the cackling witch and baying wolves in favour of actual EVP (electronic voice phenomena) recordings of paranormal activity borrowed from website [www.ghosttrackz.com](http://www.ghosttrackz.com). A strange and subtle stroll through the audible darklands, it's tough to pick out the ghost sounds from the rest of *The Terror Cycle* but the resultant mix is suitably foreboding and never ponders to cliché. Orchestral and unerving, *The Terror Cycle* makes atmosphere into an art form and for that we say amen. For info and merchandise check out [www.darkasylummusic.com](http://www.darkasylummusic.com) **TD** \*\*\*\*

Neo-Classical



**ROB ZOMBIE****Past, Present & Future**  
Genres Records

If you like horror, it's hard not to like Rob Zombie. The man virtually resurrected the genre in modern agro music with endless nods to Halloween chic and classic and cult spook films. That legacy – which can be traced back to early days with *White Zombie* – is brought together in this giddy Best Of package that highlights seventeen of Zombie's best known tracks and throws in a couple of unreleased tunes as well. You'll find audio and video versions of Zombie's gravest hits, among them *Living Dead Girl*, *Dragula*, *Superbeast*, *Spookshow Baby* and *Demonoid Phenomenon*. Along the way, Zombie also corrupts KC & The Sunshine Band's *I'm Yer Boogerman* with samples from *Halloween*, covers *Blitzkrieg Bop* and duets with Alice Cooper, Howard Stern and Lionel Richie. A monster package featuring monster art by Basil Gogos. **RG 3.5/5**



Rock

**LOS STRAITJACKETS****Supersonic Guitars in 3-D**  
Yop Roc Records

Grab yourself a taco, a big-ass glass of Sangria and set for the stars with *Supersonic Guitars in 3-D*. More than just a clever title, this one actually comes with a pair of your very own Los Straitjackets approved 3-D glasses and more np-rockin' surf guitar than you can shake a Mexican rat at. Still serving up the Ban (*Psycho Beach Party*) Vaughn sound of earlier albums, *Supersonic* is a space-surfing instrumental odyssey of classic '50s rock 'n' roll guaranteed to leave you shaken and more than a little bit stirred. If rumours about Aztec rituals and animal sacrifices during production didn't stop Jon Spencer (*Blues Explosion*) from swinging by to rock out on the terebinth, what's stopping you? **TD 3.5/5**

Sert

**ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN/  
EL NADA****Electric Frankenstein  
Meets El Nada**  
Finzer Records

Did you honestly think a few personnel changes were going to keep the mighty *Electric Frankenstein* six feet under? Shows what you know, but the New Jersey monster rock machine is back, and they've brought their friends *El Nada* along for the fight. EF's handsomely energetic sound of Dead Boys punk, Black Flag intensity, and AC/DC riffage is reaffirmed through three tracks of blood-soaked rock 'n' roll, plus a cover of *El Nada*'s 502 Blues. *El Nada* step up the evil a notch and deliver three tracks of their own booze and caffeine-charged maniacal street punk while handling *Electric Frankenstein*'s N.Y. Nights. Johnny Ace (see *RAMK32*) contributes the artwork for this spilt, making it a dream item for any trash-culture fiend's record collection. **AL 3.5/5**

Punk

fount on this two-song EP. What you'll get is a soulful rocker, heavy influences from The Cramps and The Damned in *Nice To Creature*, and a cover of the King's *Viva Las Vegas*. More proof that it always pays to have a little Elvis on every horror rock album. **AL 3.5/5**

**FINK****Son of Finkenstein**

Antidote Records

Fink, formerly Randy and the Finks, reform under a new handle with a reissue of their pop punk debut *Finkenstein*, this time with five new bonus tracks. While the band doesn't take on our genre wholeheartedly, the spookshow quota is met on tracks *Dirtnap*, *Ghosts in My Life*, and *A B-Movie Life*. It's standard Ramones/Buzzcocks bubblegum on the surface, but there's a cheese rock vibe going on that ranges in influence from *KISS* to *Motley Crue* – definitely the right sound for a band penning ditties like *My Momma Was A Teenage Prostitute* and *I Named A Zombie*. **AL 3.5/5**

Punk

**SEND MORE PARAMEDICS****A Feast For The Fallen**

In Ar The Dear Duo Records

A rated appetite for '80s thrash metal and living dead movies earned this UK hardcore act the label "zombie-core". Works for me; after all, they've taken their name from a quote in *Return of the Living Dead*, and songs like *The Hordes*, *The Pain Of Being*

Horcore

Dead and the eleven-second *Brains* only marginally illustrate how much into zombies these guys are (check out their website at [sendmoreparamedics.com](http://sendmoreparamedics.com)). The lads churn up a violent stew of bone-crushing hardcore peppered with bits of *Slayer* and *Exodus*, and the singer sounds like he's got a couple of clothespins on his cojones (hey, it works). Our compliments to the chef: *Send More Paramedics* are the kings of zombie-core! **AL 3.5/5**

**SEND MORE PARAMEDICS**

A Feast For The Fallen

**GHOST TRAIN****GHOST TRAIN****Creature**

Wreckage Productions

After serving time in various industrial and darkwave bands including *Wreckage* and *Dark Shadows*, Dave Vanian sound-a-like Tony Lestari and crew sold their souls for down home Satan lovin' psychobilly, the early evidence of which is

Psychobilly

**BLITZKID****Trace of a Stranger**

Antidote Records

*Blitzkid*, organizers of this year's *Antifest* – perhaps the world's only all horror-rock concert event – release their third album of dark, passionate horror punk with *Trace*

Punk

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# Gothic Chamber Music for the 21st Century

BY LISA LADOUCEUR

Johnny Hollow gave me a nightmare. Quite seriously, the night after listening to their music for the first time, my sleep was disturbed by images of a villain named Johnny, a grotesque man in a top hat who could not be killed, as he was completely comprised of air. It's not the first time a band has given me nightmares — Nickleback, I'm looking in your direction — but it is the first time they have been caused by something lovely, not wretched. Or at least, lovingly wretched. The sound of sultry sirens over dark electronics and crackling cello is the stuff of dark dreams.

Interestingly, there is no actual Johnny Hollow. The band in question is comprised of Kitty, Janine White and Vincent Marcone, best known as the visual artist responsible for mypyskeleton.com (see *RMK25*). The Southern Ontario-based trio created and named their group after a make-believe persona they concocted.

"We had a lot of different ideas for a name," explains vocalist and cellist Kitty. "We really wanted the group to stay even, not to be named for any one of us. So we created this alter ego. Vincent says that Johnny Hollow represents the best and the worst of us."

The three friends formed Johnny Hollow in 2000, initially to create music for the mypyskeleton website. Kitty (cello) and Janine (vocals, keyboards) were the musical instigators, having done time in classical training and some local folk bands.

"I was always a bit of an unorthodox cellist," notes Kitty. "I didn't think I would follow the route of playing in a symphony. But I think that's

**"I think that's what makes us odd; we throw classical and pop music elements into our mix."**

*-Kitty*

what makes us odd; we throw classical and pop music elements into our mix."

The band's first independent, self-titled CD (available by mail order from [www.johnnyhollow.com](http://www.johnnyhollow.com)) mixes ethereal ambience with more dance club-ready tracks, with Janine providing the ghostly vocals, and Kitty and Vincent providing spoken whispers. Kitty admits she's been influenced by the similarly-styled Rasputina (her "absolute" favourite band) and there is a slight Switchblade Symphony sweetness evident in the music, but Johnny Hollow really doesn't sound like anything else in the current goth music scene, in other words, it's actually good. Not Sisters of Mercy rock rehash here. Not vacuous Euro-trance either. Yet it sounds both classic and contemporary at the same time — warped sounds and spooky surprises sewn together like a sonic Frankenstein.

"It's half electronics and half piano and singing," Kitty says. "It's all played on real

instruments, but afterwards we put it onto computers and cut it all up, then reassemble it like a jigsaw puzzle. We had to learn the songs we'd created."

The music is only half of Johnny Hollow's appeal. The band is equally concerned with its visual side, and while they are still developing the full website and live show, there is a definite cinematic quality to the experience. Lyrics about dark things and tremors (sample: "stick me with pins/pull away my skin") paint poetic but grisly portraits of unease. You don't have to wear strappy lights or capes to enjoy it, but it



helps.

"Vincent and I definitely have a goth sensibility," says Kitty. "I grew up with an older sister who was goth, listening to Depeche Mode, Nine Inch Nails and Siouxsie. But we had no intentions of all when writing the music from one song to the next. We never meant it to come out creepy. I guess we're just creepy people." ☠

## ATTACK OF THE HOT HOD ZOMBIES

Various

Rockabilly

Shut Seven Studios  
Grassier rock and B-grade horror are on the menu for this, a bogus soundtrack for the greatest non-existent drive-in horror film never made: *Attack of the Hot Rod Zombies!* The graveyard and the garage are united in most unholy matrimony by black gospel preachers The Atomic Men, The Dead Cats, Los Creepers, Coffin Draggers and lots more, each serving up their own platter of rockabilly, psychobilly, punk, country, lounge, and anything that whiffs of the days when drive-in horror and drag strip racing was where it was at. Not every band's output is horror-themed, but most are, spinning yarns of zombie love, vampire vixens and terror at the dragstrip. This is a high octane compilation all the way to the finish line, and it's slated for release three days before Halloween. Boo-yah! **AL** 3.5/5

of a Stranger. While I thought the band closely aped the sounds of late '90s Misfits on their earlier efforts, they get more creative here with a variety of goth, '50s doo wop, and metal influences making for a mixed bag of tricks and treats, just in time for Halloween. Unfortunately, vocalist TB Monstrosity doesn't wail or croon with as much power this time, which is disappointing, and one gets the impression that a few experiments weren't well planned (the goth-pop number *Dead Again/Cold Skin* stands out in particular). But at the end of the day (or night), *Trace of a Stranger* is an ambitious attempt by the most fanatical of horror fiends to wrap the images of our beloved genre in a coffin full of dark, melodic, aggressive, rock 'n' roll. Bust out track? The S&M-themed *She Dominates*, hands down. **AL** 3.5/5



## NEW HELL REPUBLIC Seven Songs from Hell LDC ASSOCIATES

These Vancouver swindlers take just about every Misfits song ever laid to acetate, rearrange the chords a little and shift the lyrics presumably just enough to keep Jerry Only's lawyers at bay. They also toss in some cheesy '80s metal licks and dress up the cover in some vague Nazi design, but you — intelligent Rue Morgue disciple that you are — won't be fooled into thinking *Glow* is anything more than a chord for chord riff-off of *Die My Darling* and *Achtung* isn't actually *Day Of The Dead* with a half-tempo verse. Heck, Radio even starts off with the lyrics "He's down at the devil's whorehouse/It's hard to be alone yeah!" If the "homage" weren't so ridiculously distracting, these guys would have a really killer sound. Unfortunately, those of

us here in the Drome have heard this particular sound 138 times before. **TD** 3.5



## CALABRESE

### Midnight Spookshow (WWW.CALABRESEBOOK.COM)

Despite blatantly wearing their influences on their sleeves (in this case AFI, Groove Ghoules — and guess who? — the Misfits), Calabrese have crafted a damn fine EP of catchy, ghoulish, horror-punk anthems on *Midnight Spookshow*. The title track blasts out of the cemetery gates with a Davey Havok-like wail and plenty of "whoa-oh!" harmonies like the Beach Boys crashing a mad monster party. *Shrunken Head Kids* and *Blood in My Eyes* will win over fans of the modern horror punk genre with their infectious melodies, gruesome lyrics and high octave energy. The drive-in spooky flick artwork and bloody slick production values make this disc simply too good for fans of B-horror rock 'n' roll to pass up. **AL** 3.5/5



## THE G-MEN

### Rehab's For Quitters OCTOBER 32

Out from the dark alleys of Toronto scuffle The G-Men, a Frankenstein monster of past punk rock creations including *Armed & Ham-*

mered and Falls River Ferals. No, they're not horror punk, but they've dubbed themselves "Full Frontal Assault, Decapitation Strike, Death Punk Rok," and for good reason. *Rehab's For Quitters* is black-hearted, nihilist punk rock violence at its finest and with song titles like *Victimization* and *Kill Again*, you know you won't be seeing them on Canadian Aor any time soon. One of the most dangerous things to hit our hometown since S.A.R.S. **AL** 3.5/5



## NECRO

### Brutality Part 1

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Necro is Brooklyn, New York's underground brutal rhyme-buster and self-proclaimed '70s horror fanatic, who mailed us this foot-up-yes, smokin' record along with a copy of *Sexy Sluts*, his self-directed hardcore porn film. One thing's for sure, this guy ain't fuckin' around y'ol Necro and partner in crime Lil Bill bust out tunes like *Morbid Shift*, *Every Second Someone Dies*, *The Big Sleep* and my personal fave, their tribute to Slayer's *Reign in Blood* in this, their follow-up to the *Gory Days* debut CD. Now I'm not the hugest rap fan but I have to say, every single groovy loop-laden track on *Brutality* rocks (despite the over-the-top lyrics), it's really professionally produced and even features cover art by Chas (Deep Red) Balun. Come for the gore, stay for the grooves. **JV** 3.5/5

Death Rap



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# PLAY DEAD



GRAPHICS



PLAYABILITY



SHIVERS

GAMES REVIEWED BY JEN VUCKOVIC AND ANDREW LEE

HIGHEST RATING IS THREE

COMING IN NOV/DEC

## BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS

Wired Universal Games  
X-Box, PS2, Game Cube

Sunnydale's sexiest vamp killer has finally outgrown her training bra with this sequel to the original video game. *Chaos Bleeds* is being billed as a "lost episode" that Buffy fanatics can place between episodes 17 and 18 of the fifth season. In this third-person fighting game, the bombshell slayer is flanked by the usual suspects - Xander, Spike, Willow (who can cast spooky spells in addition to ass-kickings), Faith and even Sid the Dummy - whom you can switch back and forth with while you are slaking a bloodsucker in the face! This time, a tight-panted Buffy must defeat a force called Pure Evil, who has opened a new Dimensional Bleed in Sunnydale that could signal the end of the world.

Besides a new fighting engine that features over 150 crutch-spitting Slayer moves and a game area that will take hours to explore, *Chaos Bleeds* is a ditty to the original game in most respects, but who cares? Buffy fans will be happy to know that *Chaos Bleeds* will tie in to a Dark Horse comic due out just before the game's release. Recommended for Buffy diehards and vampire slayers.

## VAMPIRE HUNTER

Milton Bradley/Hustco  
Board Game

Milton Bradley and vampires aren't exactly synonymous but, believe it or not, the company that brought you *Yahtzee* and *Scrabble* has crafted a spooky board game that actually appeals to horror junkies. We're talking about a game that boasts a gigantic vampire's tower in the middle of the board, castle walls and a Master Vampire coffin. To add to the creep factor, the game is designed to be played in the dark! The object is to stake Drakus the Master Vampire before his ship reaches him, by collecting the usual vamp-hunting weapons.

Sounds easy enough, but dark forces are afoot and the light on the tower turns colours to signify nightfall... then all hell breaks loose! Peaceful villagers turn into wolves and what was once sacred ground may suddenly become a venomous spider's web. The best feature of all? The vampire can actually win the game and all of the players can lose... oh how we love unhappy endings!

## THE TESTIMONY OF JACOB HOLLOW

Third World Games  
Card Game

Make a detour to the town of Castle Bay, where 214 residents have recently been slaughtered - and no one knows why. No one but Jacob Hollow, the sole survivor who has been confined to a mental hospital. *The Testimony of Jacob Hollow* is a role-playing game with a Lovecraftian flair in which seven players are pitted against one another, collecting investigation points to uncover the puzzle behind the mass-slaughter.

The game turns out to be a little horror-like, but they've definitely got the dark vibe nailed with locations like the graveyard, the woods, the hospital, a creepy manor and, of course, the asylum. You'll also battle bloodthirsty ghosts, maniac slashers, and "demonic horrors beyond the outer edge of reason." Sounds good to us!

The rulebook is hideously short though; more effort could have been put in it to make the game more fun. Too bad, since it's a killer concept.



## THE BLACK MIRROR

Samuel Gordon returns to the Black Mirror manor after twelve years to uncover the mysterious death of his father in this horror adventure game that will feature chilly locales like medieval underground temples, mental hospitals and cemeteries. (PC)

## CURSE: THE EYE OF ISIS

This survival horror game is set in late Victorian England and has a strong Egyptian theme. Promises to be bloody. (PC | Xbox | PlayStation 2)

## NOSETRATU: THE WRATH OF MALACRI

This horror-themed first-person shooter places the player in an ancient Gothic castle full of vampires, where their friends and family are being imprisoned. (PC)

## THE HAUNTED MANSION

Who says Disney is just for kids when there's *The Haunted Mansion*? This action adventure game is based on the Disney attraction of the same name. (Xbox | GameCube | PlayStation 2 | GBA)

## GOTHIC II

Battle a world full of evils and demons in the follow-up to the medieval role-playing game *Gothic*. (PC)






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# Classic Cut

Presents

## CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD

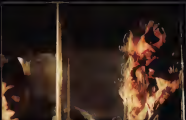


Italy - 1980

Starring Christopher George, Katherine MacColl and Carlo DeMejo

Directed by Lucio Fulci

Written by Lucio Fulci and Dardano Sacchetti



Fulci coughs up the goods in *City of the Living Dead*.

Originally a helmer of mediocre sex comedies, second-rate Westerns and competent, if unremarkable, Giallo-esque thrillers, Fulci didn't find his footing until 1979 when, thanks to the massive Italian box office success of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* and the blind faith of producer Fabrizio De Angelis, the man launched a mini wave of weird, metaphysical and festering zombie horror films (including *Zombie*, *City of the Living Dead* and *The Beyond*). Universally slammed by mainstream critics, Fulci's undead epics were accused of being gratuitously gruesome, poorly paced, ridiculously written and ploddingly plotted. What these starched, shorts-wearing cinema snobs weren't quite grasping was that Fulci had the ability to be a linear storyteller; he could, and did make movies that followed the rules.

The incredibly influential and still controversial *City of the Living Dead* is arguably his zenith work, every inch of the film reeks of death and decay and a world out of order. Taking its structural cues from H.P. Lovecraft to spin the loose story of the newly opened Gates to Hades in the town (not city) of Dunwich, spewing forth demonic phenomena and flesh-eating slits, Fulci goes the distance with waves of hypnotic, sickening images and deliriously inappropriate sound effects: babies shriek as the moldering dead crawl out of their muddy graves and rabid baboons inexplicably chitter in the New England trees.

At its core are the aforementioned gut-baring and head-drilling sequences that still have the power to make your eyes pop from their shocked skulls. Throw in Fabio Frizzi's Pink Floyd from Hell soundtrack and you have not only the freshest film from the Fulci cannon, but one of the wildest Italo-zombie head trips ever conceived, it's graphically detailed terrors echoed in the balls-out gore-fests we flock to today.

Admittedly inspired, in part, by the popular Dario Argento head scratchers *Suspense* and *Inferno*, *City of the Living Dead* manages to transcend the inherent slick pretentiousness of those works and morphs into a completely different flesh-eating beast. Was it an accident? Maybe some of it, but who cares? *City of the Living Dead* is a handringer of a horror movie, the crimson proof of an absolute visualist working at the peak of his powers. Untouchable and seething, shunned by some, worshipped by the rest, the film stands tall and spits its spleen in the faces of all who dare oppose it. In short, every inch a masterpiece. Find it and frame it.

Chris Alexander

Only one man could've done what Lucio Fulci did. Only one, and I'll be damned if I'll ever forget the first time my grade school self bore witness to it. During an all-night horror movie sleepover party, my mostly innocent, weaned-on-Friday the 13th pals and I took a chance on a beat-up old Paragon Video flick that none of us had ever heard of. It was called *The Gates of Hell* (a.k.a. *City of the Living Dead*) and this is what we saw:

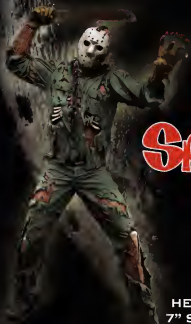
A pretty girl with wide hyper-gripped eyeballs dripping streams of blood, staring into the face of a demon priest, belching pobs of thick greasy foam, followed by some kind of squiggly organic snake. Then a heart, liver, stomach, bowels, kidney - everything - the entire intestinal tract plopping and pouring out of her wide open maw! Then, inexplicably and without warning, a twirling drill bit gets closer to a screaming tug's head. Cross edit with increasingly in-focus scary power drill. Then the twirling head. The drill. The head. Drill. Head. Closer, closer - until - almost sexually, the spinning drill pieces the shrieking, howling skull, quivering, gyrating and exploding out the other side...

That night, for us, reality was redefined forever; the taboo smashing possibilities of horror cinema swirled up and out into the stratosphere. Nobody before, or since, has had the demented sense of stomach-churning high concept style than Italian splat-master and Living Dead guru Lucio Fulci had in his finest hours. Only madman Lucio (along with visionary FX wizard Gianatto De Rossi) could've orchestrated this kind of cosmic, flesh-crunching carnage and made it seem so dreamy. Many a genre brat, battered by Fulci's films in their youth, have attempted to replicate his operatic, fetishized depictions of death, but none have managed to even scratch the blood-spattered surface.



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